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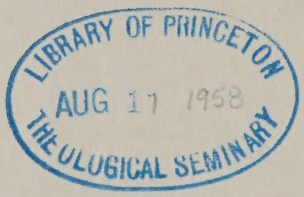

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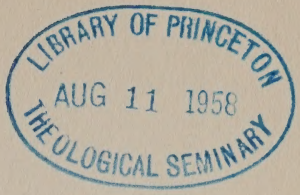
The philosophy of all
possible revelation

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ALL POSSIBLE REVELATION

Warum sucht' ich den Weg so sehnsuchtsvoll,
Wenn ich ihn nicht den Brüdern zeigen soll?

—GOETHE



THE PHILOSOPHY OF ALL POSSIBLE REVELATION

A Moral Essay and *Weltanschauung* by the Renowned Thinker of the Victorian Age

Robert Matheson

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PREFACE

Whoever lives wholly in the spirit of the following essay would live in an element of perfect romance. If the Universe is moral, a man who should make the improvement of his heart and conduct—the elevation of his own character and the good of others (two things inseparably united)—the aim of his life, and that with the utmost simplicity of necessity, and consequently ever-growing energy of resolution, would never cease, though he had an incredible faculty of living longer far than Methuselah, to find his circumstances, whatever they might be, profoundly and exhaustively interesting. For he could not live without living *originally*—that is to say, experimentally and tentatively, not mechanically or by hearsay or at random.

By originality we simply mean that insight for oneself and action for oneself, the ability to see for himself and act for himself are what distinguish a man in general, and a man from sheep. Starting with good will, a man who insists on seeing for himself and acting for himself gradually acquires a powerful and finely categorizing spirit, a strong character, and a healthy and sensitive conscience—always, of course, in proportion, not only to the energy and length of that insistence, but also to his native endowments of head and heart, which, we must loyally admit, differ so immensely

in different men. The acquisition of this spirit and character and conscience gives a man the sense of the highest possible kind of success—in other words, gives him happiness. Success in business naturally and justly gives oftentimes a considerable degree of happiness even to a good man, a man of unenvious disposition and of earnest purpose, since such success furnishes one not only with the means of life, but with abundance and security and greater freedom for devotion to right living; if this is so, then success in right living itself necessarily gives, as it is found to give, the highest possible kind of happiness.

We again assert that whoever should live *wholly* in the spirit of our essay would live in an element of the highest possible romance: in pain, in poverty, in disgrace, in whatever trials may assail the soul, there must be something to carry it triumphantly on to complete victory. That something is true Christianity, *the Gospel according to Christ.* What that Gospel is, in its fullness, nearly two millenniums have failed to show. The Gospel according to Christ is the Divinity of Man and the Humanity of God. What Christ expresses mystically we have philosophically proven: "I am in my Father, and ye in me and I in you," or, according to John (Ep. 1, Ch. iv): "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his spirit." The Universe is moral, then, and the high calling of Christ is *perfection:* "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shall love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?

After if ye salute your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

We define *perfection* to be the vital habit of incessant activity in the acquisition and use of what is highest and insusceptible of division, namely *knowledge,* and love of this activity is the only true freedom. People generally live without aim and without plan: they shift from aim to aim, without plan, or they shift from plan to plan; or, having an aim, they pursue it languidly and intermittently. But what might not anyone become who, with individual heart, aimed at perfection (knowing well that while it can never be fully attained, in thought or deed, he is acting according to one great, well-studied, settled, wise plan, from day to day and from year to year, overcoming difficulty after difficulty, adding virtue after virtue to his life and character).

Had Jesus merely called men to the pursuit of perfection, it would have been indeed a sad high calling; but Jesus made Great Practical Discoveries, and showed how that high calling can be successfully and joyfully worked out. The chief of these Great Practical Discoveries is this: *God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him.*

What a romance is MAN! How strong he is, how weak, how wise, and what a fool! A worm, and a god! What a mystery without and within! Whose thoughts wander through infinite space, and through whose senses, as though a five-fold channel, time and all the things borne along on time's broad bosom, swiftly rush! To whom without is within, and within without! In whose frail and fleeting physical form, crushed before the moth, there is an undying spirit capable of friendship with the highest God, who has wonderfully endowed him for it. For in Man, everlasting infinite Man, in the innermost of his wondrous nature, there is the throne of Will, and the high council-chamber of Reason, and the court of Conscience, and the bower of Love; and God de-

sires to sit with Will on the throne, and with Reason in the council-chamber, and with Conscience in the court, and with Love in the bower. For that bower, without him, shall not be pure, nor shall it ever know what love in its highest means and is; for, without him, that court, easily bribed, shall corruptly judge; for, without him, in that high council-hall, wisdom shall not guide; for, without him, on that throne there shall be no majesty, but instead a giddy, reeling, reckless, self-willed tyrant shall be the ruin of the realm. But Man, because of his capability for the friendship of God, has the dread power of expelling him from them all, and of refusing entrance. What a romance is *Man!* Low as Hell, he reaches high as Heaven, for there are men too, here and there, who have transcended the limits, on the heavenly side, of their moral nature, whose love has become infinite as the love of Christ or as the love of Paul when he cried, "Would to God that I were accursed from Christ for others!"

For love has reached infinity when it would be crushed for its cause, then is Man, indeed, as the Bible calls him, the glory of God, and worthy then, but only then, of his friendship and worthy to work with him as his fellow. Then sits God on the throne of Will and by his power secures its stability against all assaults; sits god in the council-hall of Reason and inspires and guides hereby the glad wisdom that was with him, the Ancient of Ages, from everlasting; sits God in the court of Conscience, and the unbribed, unerring judge, at need, consults the Living Fountain of Law; and sits God in the bower of Love, too, in his uncreated beauty, but veiled, so that the eyes of the soul may, though strengthened, endure to behold it, for to the enraptured soul, at the sight and contemplation of it, unutterable delights are made known, worthy of sacred silence. What a romance is *Man!*

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ALL POSSIBLE REVELATION

1. The old dramatist, John Marston, has humorously and felicitously expressed the experience of perhaps a majority of those who have in all ages devoted themselves to the study of mental philosophy. A scholar applies himself for seven years to making quotations of the opinions that had been held and combated concerning the soul of man. "The more I learnt," says he, "the more I learnt to doubt." Meanwhile Delight, his spaniel, sleeps. The scholar earnestly continues his labor, ardently hopeful that one or other of so many metaphysicians, intensely gazing, as it were, at their own spiritual navels, may have discovered something incontrovertibly true and important; he pores over and bores through many musty volumes, probably heavy but not weighty, diligent and thorough as a bookworm, or *Laus,* as the Germans call it, wasting much lamp-oil, wearying his baited flesh, while his veins shrink up; and still his spaniel, Delight, snoozes away delightfully comfortable.

> And still I held converse with Zabarell,
> Aquinas, Scotus, and the musty saw
> Of antick Donate.

And still the spaniel sleeps, giving way to nature; and still the scholar pursues his enquiries, or watches the factious philosophers firing brain-bullets, delivering intellectual fisticuffs, and spitting toads and serpents at each other, whenever contradiction has gone to their heads like drink. And still the spaniel sleeps outright, or at least slumbers, with

one eye quite shut, and the other very nearly so; and still the scholar goes on, or tries his best to do so, very anxious to see, if possible, to the back of beyond, terribly puzzled on the subject of the will, not knowing whether it be free or a puppet pulled by invisible strings and often tied down or bound by invisible thongs; and he reads, quotes, observes, pries, and peeps about, in and out, and fills large note-books; and all this time the spaniel, giving way to nature, snoozes comfortably in his warm hairy hide, and, says the scholar, with uncommon candour,

> At length he waked, and yawned; and, by yon sky,
> For aught I know, he knew as much as I.

What, then, was the total result of this scholar's labor, or rather intellectual debauchery? He had wasted many precious years of his life in making his mind lose its grip; for, says he, "the more I learnt, the more I learnt to doubt."

2. But was this unhappy result in anywise necessary, owing to the nature of mind? So far are we from thinking this the case, that we undertake an argument, as simple as conclusive, that shall settle forever the highest of all questions in regard to man. We shall show the unspeakable dignity of his nature, and wherein it consists; that there is not in kind, that there cannot be in the whole universe any higher being; and this we shall do in the course of an investigation, exhaustive and final, wherein we shall establish, on a foundation never to be shaken, the philosophy of all possible revelation. We shall aim at being as concise as may consist with being both clear and popular, for, though not for the million, metaphysics may be written for all thoughtful people. We distrust everything that cannot be written in plain language; and what we have to say shall be, for the most part, in the plainest language that we can reach, almost devoid of

technical terms. We write indeed for the learned, but also for those of the unlearned, and they are many, who wish to know something certain about themselves and their surroundings, from direct insight, and who have not yet lost through intellectual debauchery the capacity of belief. To ensure simplicity, I will suppose myself to be addressing an unsophisticated ploughman, one who is by nature a man of heart and intellect, who loves to read and think, who has a strong sense of his own greatness as a man, though apprehending this greatness not very clearly, and scarcely so able perhaps to express it in words as by actions.

3. I request my reader, then, this honest ploughman, or whoever he may be (and my writing will be scientific enough for any reader), to consider his mind as being completely cleared of all that he has ever learned, or supposes that he has learned. I ask him to admit into his mind, while he reads this book, nothing whatever but what he thoroughly understands, and not to pass a paragraph till he has made it his own, which in general, if not always, will be an easy thing for him to do. There must be no hearsay.

4. Now, look at your hands: examine them closely; consider the fingers, the joints, the nails; see how the thumbs are placed. Gaze at these hands of yours till you see them as if you saw them for the first time—that is to say, with astonishment and awe. Custom has made them so common to you, as it has made the other wonders of the universe, that it is with difficulty that you can see them as if you saw them for the first time. Persist in gazing, however, and you will certainly accomplish this. Having accomplished it, consider a cart or a plough! You suddenly behold a truth, or rather the truth of all truths, in light, and in and by its own light, and you probably exclaim, *There is a God!* Your honest, undebauched, unabused intellect is open to the truth, and it en-

ters, but you fail in precision of thought and expression. We cannot yet, in this paragraph, say that God is, but let us hope to arrive at that—a glorious goal for you and for me. For then we may have light in the heart as well as in the brain, and we may know where to place our highest love, which we shall by no means call "cosmic emotion." You saw in the cart or plough, those rude works, sufficient evidence of design—and what in your hands? Evidence unspeakably greater *not of design,* but of something unnameable by you, which, whatever it be, is not lower than design, but higher.

5. If there were simple design shown by your hands, there must be a designer of them, as design cannot be conceived as existing otherwise than in a designer, any more than pain can be conceived separate from a suffering subject. But your hands are so strikingly different from, and in kind higher, than any work implying design—especially when you consider your hands in relation to the rest of your body and your whole body in relation to the world—as to prove something, as yet unnameable, or at least unnamed, unspeakably greater than design. For your hands and body grew and were not mechanically fashioned. This something could no more exist of itself than design or pain could; and therefore there is what exercises this something, whatever that *what* may be.

6. We have come to a certain conclusion, a very important one, and we must pause to consider whether or not the intellect of man is capable of arriving at conclusions possessing perfect validity—in other words, whether or not man is capable of knowing. If we should decide that he is not capable of knowing, or that we know not whether or not he is capable of knowing, we would act absurdly, since the very decision itself, to be valid, would prove the contrary. Man is, therefore, capable of knowledge, or of coming to conclusions that are perfectly valid. There are questions of prac-

tical judgment, however, and questions of pure or necessary thought. I can never be absolutely sure that I do right in taking the side of the Whigs or of the Tories; I can only be morally sure; but I know, with absolute certainty, that I am right in thinking that, where two things are parallel with a third, they must be parallel with each other. In this discourse, so far as argumentative, it is with necessary thought alone that we are concerned, and no conclusion whatever must be come to that can be avoided. If any objection occurs, it must be removed; every hostile thought must be faced, pursued to its last recesses, disarmed, and made to yield.

7. When you have arrived at anything as the result of necessary thought, consider whether any amount of mere authority, however respectable, or beyond all respectability, would overturn that result in your mind. Would a whole army of angels, each asserting that there were worlds where two and two made five or fifteen, shake for a single moment your absolute knowledge that that is impossible, and that two and two can never anywhere make less or more than four? Would a voice sounding through the firmament, confirming the assertion of the angels, and accompanied by the most fearful thunder and lightning, shake that knowledge for a moment? Your flesh and blood might tremble, your tongue, Galileo-like, might contradict the truth, but your intellect would be perfectly firm and think, "Two and two make four and forever." Nay, your heart would be filled with amusement if you were in such circumstances, seemingly too dangerous, really too deep, for laughter. You would perhaps think that hell had broken loose, and that the devils were amusing themselves in practically quizzing those who imagine that truth (and consequently falsehood and error) could be divinely confirmed by a display of power. Would the assertion of a man, whom you had wit-

nessed raising the dead to life, be effectual? Would the assertion, directly addressed to you, of a being of ineffable majesty, sitting on a great white throne, built high in the empyrean and surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand angels, have more effect? Not the slightest! And why? Because you have a pure and necessary and perfect and infinite knowledge of this—that two and two make four. Let us hear no more, then, of the weakness of human reason. Human reason is infinitely strong.

8. It is admitted, of course, even by the vulgar (by whom I mean those only who have mean and inadequate notions of human nature, a class including many clergymen and others of so-called learning) that man is God's greatest work on earth. And yet many of them think to exalt God by degrading and vilifying man, as we see by such expressions as "Oh, what grace to worms!" Whereas to praise his greatest work would be to exalt and praise God. Who would think of pleasing an artist by dispraising his greatest poem or painting? If man is a worm, he is a very curious one indeed—the only one, so far as I know, capable (to say no more, at the present stage of our discourse) of absolute and infinite knowledge.

9. Man is, then, since he is capable of knowledge to perfection, a being of the most wonderful dignity; the conclusion is inevitable that if there were a God, man is altogether worthy of any revelation that God could make to him.

10. Suppose that there were only a single human being on this little planet, and that throughout all the boundless universe besides there was not one other thinking being; what would all the suns and systems together be in comparison to him! That single human being, though he lived but for one day or for one hour, would confer on those vast

heaps of shining dirt their only value. And this little planet, as the dwelling-place of that single ephemeral but thinking tenant, would infinitely surpass in dignity and importance the infinite universe beyond. That one thinker would not be little relatively to all worlds, but all worlds would be great or little relatively to their use to him.

11. But suppose that those myriads of vast worlds are not in vain, but that all of them, like our own green little globe, are the homes of thinking beings, and supply, so to speak, a physical basis of spiritual life. This supposition does not tend in the slightest to reduce the dignity of man, since those thinking beings would give to their myriads of worlds the only value they could possess, and the beings would themselves possess worth only by their participation in the qualities that constitute man—namely, thought and love.

12. We have come to the conclusion that man, by having the capacity of infinite or perfect knowledge, is manifestly worthy of any revelation that God, if there were a God, could make to him. But man is also capable of unlimited love. There have been men whose love transcended limit, who have been ready, and who have longed, to sacrifice themselves for their cause. We need say no more of the greatness and worth of man.

13. Though you have not yet been forced to admit the being of God, and you are to admit nothing but what you are forced to admit, in and by the process of necessary thought, you have arrived at *Somewhat* (whatever that may be) exercising something which we cannot name, but which is, clearly, immeasurably higher than that which we call "design," and therefore requires (if it could only obtain) another name for proper and adequate expression. You arrived at this simply by looking at your hands—the awful

divine vision of your hands. But what shall we say of that something when we consider your eyes and that which looked out at your hands through your eyes? This living locomotive house, of which your hands form a part, is inhabited; and the inhabitant is the wonderful being whose thought and love and consequent greatness and worth, we have just considered—namely, *you*. You are the unity of thought and love; you possess character; you call yourself a person, an individual; you say, "I." You not only say, my field, my house, my body, but also, and more emphatically, my soul: you are capable of self-ownership. Every other creature known to you is ridiculously below you, as appears at once by applying to the highest of them, the "half-reasoning" elephant, as it has been called, the terms *individual, person, character*. No other creature can own anything, because it cannot own itself. It does not possess its instinct, but is possessed by it. Even an elephant cannot say to itself, of itself, "I," having no self-reflection, self-consciousness, reason. It has only simple consciousness and instinct, which, strictly speaking, are not its own.

14. But this unity of thought and love saying "I," this personality, individuality, character, self-consciousness, with consequent self-ownership and ownership of other things, has, with these ownerships, a sense of responsibility, conscience. You, this wonder of wonders, looking through your wonderful eyes at your wonderful hands, a short while ago were not in this world, and you have no recollection of having been anywhere else before; again, in a little while you will not be here. You, this personality, a self-owner, with conscience, rose to being, at any rate, to consciousness and self-consciousness, some little time ago in a little matter (as it is called) curdled milk in your mother's womb. You could not make yourself, and your father and mother did not make you, any more than the hen-wife, by placing an

egg beneath a brooding hen, made the chicken that sprang from it. You were produced by that *Somewhat,* whatever it may be, at which we arrived; and when you look, not now to your hands, but to your personality, it is more than abundantly evident that the *Somewhat* exercises a something unspeakably superior to design. A watchmaker designs and makes a watch: production of a man is not higher than the watchmaker's work, as, for instance, an inspired painter or poet's work is higher, but it is altogether out of comparison with it or with any work with which design has anything to do.

15. An unconscious but striking testimony to the reverence with which we regard personality is furnished by the fact that the word *person* is seldom, if ever, applied without qualification to those who are under twenty or even somewhat over. We say "*young* person"; and if it were a question of censure, especially of severe censure, or punishment incurred, it would be felt to be rather harsh and unfeeling not to use the qualifying word. For personality here implies, not an assumed character to be played on a stage by an actor, with hand-clapping or hisses for success or failure in the imitation, but a real character to be developed throughout all life by an immortal spirit, with eternal issues of the most blessed or awful nature. And even in the face of many grievous errors we still have hope for the young, and rightly attribute much to giddiness and thoughtlessness rather than to wilful perversity and real badness of heart.

16. I am purposely delaying the rapid development of my argument, mindful of the proverb: The more haste, the less speed. The whole might perhaps be put into a few sentences, but the same thing in another manner is not the same thing. Let the reader read on trustfully, but taking nothing on trust.

17. Some short time ago (at the most) you rose into existence in a little matter curdled like milk in your mother's womb, and you expanded every moment of the night and day for nine months, and finally you were born, a small helpless baby, with five untrained senses, with a brain blank, and with an empty heart. Surrounded by love and watchful intelligence, you gradually learned to distinguish things by sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch, and, by native power of category, the essential characteristic of spirit; growing more and more conscious, aided by a language taught you, embodying the realized spirit of ages, you learned not only to distinguish but to know them, and to know them better and better. What was your spirit at birth? Empty form merely, we may call it, or better, a simple potentiality of spirit, capable of self-realization. Consider your mind for a little under this aspect, as something that has been filled, or as something realized. Your spirit has realized itself by what may be called its filling, as the ideal apple tree in the apple seed has realized itself by sucking from the soil and the surrounding atmosphere those elements required by its nature. There in the garden, in spring, with a thick trunk, with boughs hanging in the air, with multitudinous leaves and blossoms shedding fragrance, it stands a green and white permanent cloud, a vision and a wonder, just as your ideal spirit stands realized by its knowledge of various kinds. The growth of your spirit by increase of knowledge has gone on from birth; and if you think away, if you consider that increase backwards, month by month, or year by year, what are you doing but thinking of your spirit as shrinking back from its realized fullness to its empty potentiality in the baby fresh from the womb?

18. But no other animal realizes an ideal spirit, because every mere animal is destitute of the essential characteristic of spirit—namely, the faculty of categorizing. Because of the

lack of that faculty, no mere animal is free; it acts by impulse, is ruled by the particular and the immediate, is incapable even of suspending or controlling its instinct for one moment. It is, though in a different fashion, driven and drawn as truly as a door-nail and as if it were as dead as one. It is, in the words of Isaiah, "flesh and not spirit." It knows nothing; no dog can say to itself, "I am a better dog than that dog," "I am swifter and stronger than that dog," or "I am an ill-used dog"; and the so-called "half-reasoning" elephant, on seeing a crow fly past him and croak for the thousandth time, can only have the momentary vague sensation of a black flying cry in the air.

19. The mere potentiality of spirit which you were at birth was perhaps below the instinct of most animals at that stage, and immensely below that of some of them; a chicken, for instance, is born almost fully equipped for life, and you will sometimes see it running and feeding unaided with the shell still sticking to its tail. Consider, for a moment, this wonder—that the strongest of all things known to us, spirit, is originally as weak as the weakest. Spirit potential, as known to us in this world, could not continue and develop without the long protection and help of spirit realized.

20. Spirit is the strongest of all things, and from birth it proceeds to develop itself, by reducing into itself, through knowledge, the external universe. We say *external* universe, provisionally, for we are to admit nothing but what we are forced to admit. And certainly we experience nothing whatever outside of ourselves. All our experience is within. Animals, plants, the earth, the sky—all things whatever are seen by us within; all sounds—the chirp of a sparrow, the roar of thunder—are heard by us within; all smells, all tastes, all touches are within. The world of the senses, equally with the world of the spirit, is within.

21. You must now fully realize this: you cannot by any means reach out of yourself. Believe that there is a world out of yourself, or not, just as you please, at present: we have nothing to do with that. What we know and are forced to admit is that all things whatever, including your own body, as you know them, are within you. You experience all that you experience of an outward world, or of a supposed outward world, in your senses. We are not concerned at present with the fact that there is or is not an outward world, and not being so concerned, we neither admit nor deny it. If there is an outward world, you can never know it without, only within. Before going farther, you must fully realize this, and the matter really presents no difficulty.

22. For the sake of convenience, however, we shall speak of the world as external. The outward world, then, you make your own, so far as you make it your own, through your senses only. This outward world has a twofold relation to you: it furnishes you with the means of supporting your body and with the means of realizing your spirit. The former is subsidiary to the latter: you cannot live well unless you first live. The outward world, therefore, is there only for the sake of spirit, since its relation to spirit is what gives it at last its only value.

23. "There is nothing in the intellect," it has been said, "but what was first in the senses"—a most unhappy saying, proverbial as it has become. Someone added, "except the intellect itself," which does not mend the matter; and indeed the saying itself presupposes that. The saying is altogether slovenly, showing the thought to have been without clearness and precision. There is nothing in the intellect that ever was in the senses. What the writer was driving at is this: that nothing would have been in the intellect had there been nothing first in the senses, which is true. Spirit

is realized by the intellect operating, so to speak, on the contents of the senses, and it is excited to action only by what has been presented to it by them. We have now arrived at the proper place for clearly explaining how spirit realizes itself.

24. As with the individual, so with the race: if you think away, if you think backwards, age by age, every triumph of spirit realizing itself in sciences, arts, and religions, with, at the same time, of course, the increase of the race in numbers from age to age, you necessarily arrive at a time when you have emptied the human spirit of all its acquisitions, when you have reduced it to a mere potentiality of spirit, standing perfectly ignorant in the presence of boundless nature.

25. We seem, at first sight, to come in contact here with the greatest of all philosophical difficulties and one demanding of us a solution—namely, the difficulty of thinking a beginning. But such is not the case. We care not at present how a beginning took place or whether it can be thought; all that we have to do is to find out the necessary process of spirit in its going forth from the first to conquer nature. We care nothing here, therefore, for the evolution theory or for any other theory. But, in passing, we may say that the very farthest possible stretch of the evolution theory, supposing it to be true, would not give us the very slightest assistance in imagining a beginning, for evolution presupposes involution. Nothing can be evolved that was not involved. And do not foolishly fancy that, by giving man a tail, you would *simply put an end to him.* Man would be not less man, though he walked on four or fourteen feet, with a shaggy hide, a tail, and a head of horns to boot; man is man by thought and love.

26. Nor have we anything whatever to do at present with the account of the creation of man given in the Book of Genesis. We shall examine that account before we have done. Meanwhile we have only to consider the first pair, or pairs, standing blank before nature, and making some progress, however slight, towards knowledge: the first family, or families, inheriting to some extent the experience of their parents, and making some advances of their own; and so on, along the whole course of history, till today, when spirit is still striving, more vigorously than ever, to realize itself and subdue nature by knowledge. It would be very easy but very useless, in relation to our argument, to expatiate here: it is enough to state the fact that the progress of the whole race, in developing and realizing itself, must exactly resemble the progress of a single individual, who, from stage to stage, as the race from age to age, advances with increased power and freedom to new victories of knowledge.

27. We began our argument, at paragraph Number 4, by looking at our hands, and we kept gazing at them till we looked away the vulgarizing effects of custom, and we saw our hands to be the dumb-striking wonders which they really are. We found that the consideration of our hands alone led us with certainty to the fact that there is a Somewhat exercising something ineffably higher than design. But, in relation to that unnameable something, our hands in themselves almost sank into insignificance when we thought of the living house of which they form a part, when we thought of the spirit dwelling in that house—a being capable of knowing infinitely or perfectly, a being of unlimited love, whose nature gave to the whole boundless external universe the only value which the whole boundless external universe could possess. But what shall we think of that something which is ineffably above design (since design is shown by a plough or a cart) when we consider the spirit in its living

house as being but one of the race? The only business of the spirit has been, from the beginning, the realization of itself, in thought and love—each individual as a self-owner, first for himself, and then for the whole: the race transmitting, from the beginning, from age to age, in languages, sciences, arts, religions, the results of their triumphant labors for the advantage of aftercomers, who now start no longer like the first man or men, but as if they were already thousands of years old. What shall we think of that ineffable something?

28. But consider to what we have now arrived—to the unity of the internal and external, to the unity of spirit and matter, to the unity of man and nature. What is realized spirit but the reduction, in the first place, of nature into spirit? If, however, nature were essentially foreign to spirit, spirit might indeed be conceived as able to conquer nature as something foreign to it and apart, but spirit could not grow and realize itself by means of nature. Nature, therefore, is spiritual and spirit. The coarsest-looking portion of nature, what seems absolutely dead, is, however, when closely examined, fine beyond conception, and alive, if not as a separate-looking organic entity, yet in universal law; and law is spiritual or spirit. Take a grain of sand: though in itself not alive, as a plant or an animal is alive, it is, in every smallest conceivable and inconceivable portion of it, alive in universal law, an indissoluble part of the universe, and it is coming to be what it is not, and therefore passing away from being what it is. This is happening not merely every moment—for a moment is only the smallest named portion of time, and not in every millionth part of every moment merely—but *always.* We have now thought that grain of sand, and necessarily with it every other thing, *into thought.* All nature is therefore spirit or spiritual.

29. Throughout all nature, from the wonders of crystal-

lization up to the highest animal below man, you have upon each thing the direct and visible impress of spirit. No human skill, with the most exquisitely fine of possible instruments, could rival the work of spirit in nature in its meanest effort—namely, the formation of crystals. Then from the lowest vegetation up to the grandest trees; up to the loveliest flowers, spirit in nature has transcended that first meanest effort, which only attained to an image of life, and has now attained to life itself, but life yet of the lowest grade. Then, from the lowest of the animals up to the "half-reasoning" elephant, spirit in nature all but attains self-realization and freedom. The elephant, however, after all, is all but man, as Ballantyne was all but the author of the Waverley novels! For here "all but" is really *anything but.* As the crystal was a mockery of life, instinct is a mockery of reason. From crystallization, then, the work of spirit in the dust, up to instinct, all but free, the work of spirit in organized flesh and blood, spirit has, as it were, been endeavoring to realize itself, and, though succeeding better and better, has hitherto failed. One other effort: imperial *Man* appears. Victory!

30. But consider the air, without which plants and animals could not exist, so that they are one with it; consider heat and light, derived from the sun, without which neither plant nor animal could live; nay, that heat and light are the very means through which all things are formed. The heat that is in sap and blood was once in the sun; and not merely the light of day, but the light of your fire, long imprisoned in coal, wood, or peat, and now again let loose, was once there.

31. Without man, without self-conscious spirit, without a being possessed of thought and love, all those things, as we saw, and the whole boundless universe besides, would be absolutely destitute of the slightest value. But man, lordly

man, appears, owning himself and therefore capable of owning them and their worth, in relation to their king "crowned with glory and honor." "Thou madest him," says the Hebrew poet, "to have dominion over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas." But the Hebrew poet, looking at the matter externally and instinctively, failed to see that while in the political world subjects and a kingdom are necessary for a king, they, in the world of spirit, *are* the king, and that, in the strictest scientific sense, without them the spiritual king not only is not a king, but is not at all.

32. The oak *is* not, so long as it remains in the acorn, except ideally, and, in like manner, spirit *is* only ideally in a new-born child. Both are realized—the tree by striking its roots into the earth and assimilating whatever suits its limited nature, spirit by *discerning* or dividing all things and then combining them under categories, according to the characteristics discovered in the process of dividing. Thus spirit assimilates, not whatever suits its nature—as if it were only a limited particular like a tree—but everything, as it is universal, and a match for the whole contents of nature. The root of the tree, meeting with what is contrary to it, passes it, or tries to pass it; spirit, on the other hand, faces all difficulties, and finds a special charm in whatever it has not yet been able to reduce to thought, while charm gradually disappears with possession. Now, as we have already said, if you think away, or think backwards, year by year, the increase of a human spirit, its contents, the fruit of its victories over nature, you will arrive at the new-born baby, a mere ideal or potential spirit—just as by a similar process in regard to the tree you will arrive at the acorn. And as with the individual, so with the race.

33. The instrument by which spirit realizes itself, as a tree by its roots, is its power of category, which depends on the faculty of language for even its smallest exercise. Language and categorizing are indeed mutually dependent, and develop together, by action and reaction. They are perhaps as truly one as two, like soul and body. At any rate, without language, or some equivalent, categories could not take form and be held fast by the mind. Now, what is language and its necessary development?

34. Language is no accident, but is indeed the chief feat of spirit, and that by which every other feat in self-development is possible. The boundless contents of space and time can only be made its own by an unlimited word-making power. These contents may be called *Things* and the *Altering of Things.* We define language, then, as the naming of things and of the altering of things. It consists, therefore, strictly speaking, simply of nouns and verbs. The other parts of speech are dependent on these. Pronouns and adjectives are substitutes for and qualifications of nouns, and articles are only types of adjectives. Adverbs are qualifications of verbs. Prepositions mark the relations of nouns and verbs. Conjunctions are simply a convenient invention for the formation of sentences. As for interjections, their name implies their character—they are words thrown in among the rest, and they are named merely in order that no vocal expression of mind (or rather feeling) may be without its category. Though of little importance, they, like prepositions, which are of the greatest importance, bear an equal relation to nouns and verbs. Such is the nature of the different parts of speech.

35. We have said that nature, in relation to spirit, serves two purposes: *first,* supplies food, raiment, etc. for the body, since man must live before living well; second, furnishes the

means of his mental development. The first is there for the second, which, second in the order of time, is of course first in rank. And it must have been with the race as it is with the individual: a supply of food, drink, raiment, shelter, etc. demanded all its first energies. The things and the altering of things most necessary to know in the pursuit of these would be first named. One can easily see how they would, so to speak, demand to be named, and would trouble the imagination of the most vigorous spirits—if we may give that title to men at such an almost brutal stage of existence—till they were named. Once named they troubled the imagination no more. They would be named from their chief characteristics in relation to their use for bodily necessities. Many a potential poet doubtless went down to the dust, in the course of the first ages, bequeathing only a few names of things unnamed before, and perhaps they were remembered after death for a few months for their curious aptitude for observing and naming: and, though potential poets, not so much a little lower than the angels as a little higher than the brutes. This faculty for naming and perhaps for intenser feelings of love and joy and grief, with a keener sense of beauty and of awe, might be all that distinguished them. Yet what does it matter for that? Their lives were not lost; and, if you look well into it, you will find that they have their good share in the works of Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare. For the development of spirit in the race is, though manifold, *one*.

36. The first most pressing wants having been satisfied, others would arise, and ever others, requiring the naming of other objects, for it is the nature of spirit not to rest, but always to go on transcending its past, never counting itself to have attained. But when the clamorous wants of the body were satisfied, the special wants of the spirit as such would begin to announce themselves—at first weakly, unconsciously,

at last consciously, and ever more consciously. These wants, with their objects, required naming also. Now, the means of naming these were at hand—namely, the language invented to express bodily wants and their objects. For, as spirit is that within which nature is without, it follows that a metaphorical use of words which express natural objects express spiritual things also. Now began the special work of the poets, such as it remains at this day, and must ever remain—the work of uttering what men in general, or oftener perhaps what the better spirits, long to utter but cannot. A vague spiritual feeling and longing possessed the hearts of men; it was uttered in what was felt for the time to be an adequate manner; this gave a sense of freedom and consequent joy; the language in which the feeling was uttered was delighted in, treasured, repeated, and repeated; and even by means of this repeated utterance (putting out what was within) or expression (pressing out) the feeling as it was at that raw stage was eventually got rid of. But not lost; for at the same time it was a feeling realized, and this marked an important step in the progress of humanity. It was the first step into the infinite internality of spirit. When the first step into the infinite externality of nature was accomplished, it prepared the way for another, and these for other steps, and ever others, with increase of strength and skill, on and on to the highest reaches of science yet attained, and on and on towards all attainable and unattainable reaches. So it was with spirit also—the first step was but the beginning of an endless march, and the poet is a supply for a demand that can never cease.

37. We began by looking at our hands; and we concluded, from them alone, that there is Somewhat engaged in exercising something that we cannot name, but which is not design, being unspeakably higher in kind. What can we now think of this something when we consider our hands as a

part of the living unity of infinite spirit and infinite nature? But your cart and your plough showed *design!*

38. We proceed with our argument. We said that from crystals, the mockery of life in the dust, up to the highest of the animals below man, spirit seemed to have been making a series of abortive attempts to realize itself; but when we look at that series from the point which we have now reached, what a different aspect does it present! The work of spirit is self-realization by self-knowledge, which must proceed by ever new successful efforts at naming. Think, then, not of the use, so much as of the necessity, of those apparently abortive attempts, for that work. This brings us to consider how it is that spirit and nature are one.

39. In the progress of its self-realization, spirit attains to the categories under which it ranks *all* things belonging to nature, and *all* things belonging in the more intimate sense to itself, namely, space and time. Now, spirit and nature are two and yet one, like the head and the tail of a coin. The head and the tail of a coin are two, and yet one in a third, which is neither and both—the between having no existence, except in the other two, which it embraces. But the *between* is a vague term and no name, like head and tail, and very properly; it is really unnameable, having no characteristic separate existence. It is, however, absolutely necessary for the existence of head and tail, and it is really first and last, for without it they are nothing. And if spirit and nature are two and yet one, they also must be one in a third, which is neither because it is both, and unnameable from special characteristic, like the third in the coin, and yet being, like it, the first and the last. In the coin we *see* the third with our eyes, stretching from utmost extreme to utmost extreme; and, after a little consideration, we shall likewise see, with perfect clearness, with our mental eyes, the unnameable

third, in which spirit and nature are, and are one, for the three are one. We found that under space and time are categorically arranged all existences—all that is in nature and all that is in spirit. But what are space and time? They are mental things merely, that is to say, abstractions, and they have no real existence. We say, the horse is a noble animal, meaning all horses; but the horse, just because it means all horses, is not one itself. In like manner, space is a general abstract term, and arose thus: Things were observed to differ in length, width, and depth. Lengths, widths, and depths belonging to objects required a name—they were called spaces; and space is the general abstract term for all spaces. But these particular spaces themselves have no real existence, like horses; they are nothing but an invention of the understanding to enable it to deal with apparent limits which nowhere really exist. All that really exists is the one unlimited thing, nature. Nature is absolutely one, but apparently many; as your body is one, and your members many; as the tree is one, but with sap, roots, trunk, branches, boughs, twigs, leaves, blossoms, fruit; as the fruit is one, and yet many—rind, pulp, core, seed; as the seed is one, and yet many containing in it potentially a whole undeveloped tree; and as other things, and also part of things, are one and many—with this difference, that neither your body nor the tree, nor anything else, is absolutely one, but is one of the many belonging to nature, the absolutely one. But the apparent many of the one nature are in perpetual change—and it is change alone that gives to spirit the notion of time. Nay, it is change of the many of nature that produces men, that is, individual spirits. Activity produces its like and spirit is activity. But equally with space, time is an abstract invention of the understanding for the purpose of categorizing all particular times, which, like particular spaces, have no real existence. What exists is nature and nature is in perpetual change. Things do not exist, they only appear to exist, for,

before you can think they are, they are not; and though smoke and vapor visibly change, they change no more in reality than do stone and metal. All particular changes are due to universal change—which is the one law, and law is reason, and reason belongs to spirit. There is therefore no such thing as time, which is simply a useful abstraction and invention of the reflective understanding; for there can be no duration where nothing endures. Space then and time, which is a notion due to what is phenomenal, are not. As regards time, this will be farther apparent, if needed, by considering that it is measured by regularity of change; but regular change is no more change than is irregular change. Had there been no regular change, and consequent measurement of time by minutes, hours, days, years, etc., there could only have been a consciousness of *state,* and of change of feeling in relation to event. In exact proportion to the intensity with which anything is desired or held in aversion, it seems to come slow or swift. Farther consider the fantastic (though useful) divisons of time—past, present, future: the past *is not,* the future *is not;* what *is* is an everchanging present. This forever *is,* and is the true eternity, and it is even here, in this world, when it is well considered. Time and space considered as really existing would be infinitely divisible; but to think of dividing them infinitely is to think them away into pure thought; therefore, they do not really exist. Then consider the absurdity of unbeginning time or duration. It is impossible to think a beginning to time, though you may conceive it as never-ending. What is conceived as being an unbeginning thing has of course never begun.

40. All that exists, as we saw, are nature and spirit, which are one in an unnameable third, which is neither and both; so that the third is all in all. We have opposed spirit to nature, and as nature is a category for embracing all particular things, so spirit is a category for embracing all individual

spirits. But we found nature to be absolutely one, with only an apparent many. With reference, then, to one and many, how stands it with spirit? Is spirit one?

41. At present we are only concerned with spirit as it is known to us, so to speak, in nature, or as it seems to rise in nature. At the very first glance at the business, there seems an irreconcilable difference between them, and on a little further examination, the breach seems to be boundless; but, as we may mend the proverb, all good things come round to those who work and wait. Possession in nature is exclusive; but not so in spirit. Scotland being divided, whoever owns a house or a field, does, by that ownership, exclude all others from possessing it; and this applies to every material object whatsoever. Not so with spirit. Spirit is insusceptible of division. The doctrine is good also in regard to the fruits of Nature and of Spirit. Whoever possesses the revenue of a house or a field excludes, because that revenue is material; but the possession of knowledge, love, and spiritual wealth and goods of every name and kind excludes no one; on the contrary, the possession has a tendency to communicate itself, and it does communicate itself, and that without division or reduction; nay, the exercise in giving here tends to addition and multiplication. But spirit rises in a body, and the body belongs to nature, and its possession excludes. That which is insusceptible of division, spirit, which owns itself inalienably, and but for which all nature as such would be worthless, appears in what is divisible and alienable, and can be taken possession of by others. At executions, receipts are given and taken for the criminal's body, but no one can give a valid receipt for another's spirit. This illimitable and most powerful of all things, spirit, appears in a weak and small body, and this only serves to show its greatness the more. It is as if it had said: "Just let me exist. There stands a ground for my existence in what you call nature. The

smaller case, perhaps the better; it will help to show what I am, and what I can do with little means, and my triumphs then cannot be attributed to anything except my own inherent energy."

42. Spirit, then, like nature, is, though an apparent many, one, because it is indivisible, as we found Nature indivisible, though an apparent many. But, as we cannot say all things at once we seem to have arrived at a strange and furious contradiction with regard to nature. We said that nature is indivisible because it is one, and that divisions are only apparent; and again that it is divisible, whereas spirit is not. But there is no real contradiction. Spirit, as well as nature, has an apparent many; and our question had reference only to possession. Spirit is its own inalienably; but, owning itself, it can also possess what is or seems not itself. What it owns, however, of this latter it does not own absolutely, but as commodity and with reference to its body, which itself, strictly speaking, is commodity. It can therefore alienate all possessions of this kind. But possessions of this kind are only real in reference to commodity; no house, or field, or material thing absolutely belongs to any man, or can so belong. It is only *called* his own by compact and agreement with another; as agreement, too, only *allowed* by arbitrary law of the state; and house and field, and body-clothes and body, and one's natural life belong as commodity to the state when the state shall need and demand them. But the man's spirit and spiritual possessions are absolutely and inalienably his own. The house field, etc. cannot be absolutely possessed, for they are in a continual state of change, and are not the same for two seconds. The changing belongs to the changing, as far as it can belong, that is to say, *apparently,* and the unchanging to the unchanging, as far as it can belong, that is to say, *absolutely and eternally.* Therefore nothing in nature can be absolutely possessed except by spirit as spirit; and all

nature absolutely belongs to spirit as spirit; for spirit and nature are one, and therefore nature is spirit.

43. We have shown that nature is one, as against the supposition that it is many; that spirit is one, as against the like supposition; and that spirit and nature are not two, but one. But can that which is neither two, nor more than two, and which is infinite, be *one?* No; for one is one as being limited, and therefore one of two or more; for what is limited is limited by another. This one is unnameable in every way, and is only *called one,* as possessing what is a not-two-or-moreness, for, being infinite, it is not one. This so-called one is the third already referred to as the unnameable, the all in all, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. And what is this one but that somewhat which we were in search of as exercising something inconceivably greater than design? And what is that but GOD!

44. We have found God by intellectual search. By moral search, too, we may find Him. But, in both senses, He is to be found, as must now be evident, only by His own revealing of Himself to us, since He is all in all. It is only with thought derived from Him that we can know Him; it is only with love derived from Him that we can love Him. To show how these revelations of Him, which include all possible revelations of whatever sort, do and must take place is the chief purpose of this discourse.

45. But before going forward to accomplish our design, we must remove certain misapprehensions of God which may obtain in the reader's mind. The reader may be one of those very numerous persons who have contented themselves with vague notions, where mere words occupy the places of thoughts and things, in relations to the highest matters, either because they have never attempted to transcend the

teachings of childhood, which are necessarily erroneous in form, or because they lacked ability, without assistance, to transcend them. It may be that, if the intellect in childhood were left unoccupied by notions of God which childhood is utterly unable to realize, the chief of all things, the education and culture of the heart, would suffer, and that in many —if not in most—cases irrevocable damage would result. Children are therefore properly taught that there is a God living away up there in Heaven, who, at the same time, is present everywhere, and that He hears and see everything, and that He made everything, and that He loves and rewards the good but is angry with and punishes the wicked. Even in early childhood, however, the clearer heads are not quite satisfied with this. The incipient philosophers will sometimes ask such questions as these: "Is God large?" "Had He a father and mother?" "Who made Him?" "Is He very old?" "What did He make things out of?" "Did it require much nothing?" "Did it take all the nothing that there was?" "Are there different kinds of nothing?" "Did He make angels and grass out of the same kind of nothing?" "Does He sit in heaven?" "What does He sit on?" "Does He walk about?" "What does He walk on?" "Did He always and always stand before He made anything?" "If it had been you, wouldn't you have made a sofa?" "But, O me! *before* you made the sofa, you would have had to stand forever and forever and forever, wouldn't you?" They often ask such questions, going into metaphysics up to the chin, and over head and ears, and often receive very unsatisfactory replies. A brother, a little older, and willing to show that wisdom comes with age, may reply: "Goosie! Don't you know that God is a spirit?" Whereupon a dialogue such as the following results:

INCIPIENT PHILOSOPHER: But what is a spirit?
ORTHODOX ELDER BROTHER: I don't know. Just a spirit.

I.P.: But isn't a spirit something and not nothing?

O.E.B.: Of course! But we mustn't be wise above what is written; and the Bible doesn't say what a spirit is. It just says that God is a spirit; that's all.

I.P.: I would give everything that I have, all my marbles, and both white rabbits, to know what a spirit is. Wouldn't you?

O.E.B.: No, I wouldn't. What's the use? You could get a shilling for your rabbits.

I.P.: What's the use! When we've got enough to eat and drink, isn't all the rest just to know, and to know, and to know, always more, and more, and more?

O.E.B.: No, no, Goosie! When we've enough to eat and drink, we need more to make us comfortable; and we should get and lay by money to make us comfortable all our lives; and we should believe what is right, in order to be comfortable to all eternity in Heaven. We should try to know arithmetic, and geography, and *useful* things.

I.P.: I feel that you are wrong; and I hope to know yet what God and spirit is. But I wish to know arithmetic and geography, too.

46. Now, our little keen inquirer, so anxious to know, is an incipient philosopher and an Israelite indeed, and his orthodox brother, so willing to cover his ignorance by words, and so anxious to possess property is a Philistine pretty well developed. It is easy to see that the paths in life of these two will widely diverge, and that, whatever they do, the one will hold fast to the form of what are considered sound words by the church into which he happened to be born, and that the other will have an inward necessity of understanding whatever words he uses before admitting them to be reasonable. He will not have the vulgar and cowardly presumption of deciding on doctrine without examination; he will have the humility and honesty to make an exhaustive inquest, and

the honesty and courage to proclaim the result. Nor will he rest satisfied till he knows the truth for himself. No hearsay whatever, however respectable it may appear by its reputed source or antiquity, will have authority for him; truth is not a thing for the ear and tongue, but for the intellect and heart. It is not a thing to be spoken and written in air and ink, but to be lived spiritually.

47. A deistical abstraction, a general notion of a God, to which, for the nonce, one gives ears and eyes and other things which we know it does not possess, can never satisfy man. And luckily it requires but very little energy of mind to dismiss for ever from one's thoughts this miserable, though for a time perhaps necessary, idol of the childish imagination. But yet what multitudes, including many divines, are forever unable to get effectually rid of it in after-life! To this idol is absurdly attributed almighty power, and he is said to be the creator of nature, which he made out of nothing. Well, if, when this God is supposed to have existed alone, he made nature out of nothing, nature is at bottom nothing still, even if he made it out of the very best, closest, hardest nothing that he could find in himself. For, filling all and being all, there could be no nothing out of him, at any rate none worth mention, for it would have been difficult to scrape together two and a half pounds avoirdupois of it, if indeed so much, and the most orthodox divine cannot suppose, if he will speak what he thinks, that an ounce less would have sufficed. We will not stay to enquire whether the nothing used was spiritual nothing or material nothing, or whether there existed two varieties; nor might we be successful in our inquiries, since even theology itself is silent on that important point. Theologians have differed as to the mode in which the portion of nothing which was honored by the divine selection was made sufficiently aware of the divine intentions, and of the high distinction conferred upon

it. Some have thought that a mere internal exercise of the divine *will* was adequate to rouse nothing from its nothingness. Others again think a *word* was used, forgetting that this implies, to say no more, the existence of an ear in nothing, which creates another little difficulty. And others think that the *nod* of a good abstraction, to which they have made a present of almightiness, was abundantly sufficient in the circumstances to put nothing on the alert, forgetting that this implies, at the least, an eye in nothing, or perhaps thinking that an eye or so is not much—and right enough, too, for much more is not much in theology. Theologians are not now, where once they were, in the saddle, riding our souls; and if any reader, after what has been said, is in the slightest doubt as to the creation of the world out of nothing, let him consider the terrible force of ingrained habit, and let him remember that all the nothing that was had lain undisturbed for a whole eternity in perfect ease and idleness. How sullenly reluctant it would have been to be fingered for anything, much more for the purpose of having an eye or an ear fixed in its head—not to speak of having to spring up, on the shortest notice, and be stretched out to bursting on all sides. Let the reader consider this, and he will think the creation out of nothing the work only of theologians, who are certainly able to create out of it, since, indisputably, they have often created out of it at least many great difficulties.

48. Theologians give to their abstraction a whole eternity of idleness, and, after six days labor (the labor of saying a few words each day), another long rest. But they have forgotten that if there had been a time when the universe did not exist, it never could have existed, even if nothing, in terror of damnation for disobedience, had not proved refractory, or, weary of its beinglessness, had been willing to be if it could only see how to take the first step, for nothing is no great genius. The truth is that these theologians do not

think what they are saying and content themselves with words, words, words. Their God was idle, or He was not idle, before the supposed creation. But what could give a more blasphemous, because ridiculous and degrading, conception of God, than a conception of Him as eternally idle, not even thinking? And if not perfectly idle, He must have been thinking; but what could He think, what difficulty had He to overcome by inward debate, since difficulty presupposes finiteness? And even if difficulty had been possible, there would always have been a whole past eternity during which any difficulty must have been overcome by the struggle of the divine thought. Then, as an eternity would always have been past, the period would always have arrived for creation. One feels almost ashamed of exposing such folly, preached by confused men to a simple credulous race, patient of authority, in the name of religion. Such exposure was, however unhappily, necessary, and it needs to be done again and again. Again and again so long as black doctrines of God are taught, so long as descriptions of God are given which, instead of being attractive to the pious young soul, are crushing and horrifying to it, and which, even after his tough theological training, make the Rev. Dr. Cunningham of Crieff shudder even to read. "By the decree of God," says the Confession of Faith, in a sweet chapter, a chapter breathing of sweet reasonableness, a chapter full of sweetness and light, the sweet and edifying third chapter—"By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished." *L'étrange Dieu que voilà!* "For the manifestation of his glory." *L'étrange Dieu que voilà, encore une fois!* This sweet and edifying chapter states that this doctrine affords

"matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God." Theologians are wonderful creatures; and it is surprising that they did not find it to afford matter so love-inspiring that the steady contemplation of it was enough to ensure the fulfillment of the first and great commandment. But since Holy Willie's Prayer, this Demon-God has been slowly dying, though many doctors have done what they could for Him, and though Dr. Rainy, but with an insufficient number of assistants, is still doing his best. Once in the popular imagination, it takes long for a God to die; but the arrows are in Him, He is smitten; I see His death in vision; He begins to roll in His throne like a creature full of fiery anguish. Lo, His crown is off, the tyrant of ages; see, He rises in mortal agony, but He rises to fall, never to rise. But who are these by the throne? They seize, they lift, they hurl Him headlong; and look where down the steep at last He tumbles—and man is free!

49. We have arrived at the true God, who is the One and All, in whom both spirit and nature are one; but we found that He is only called One as against the notion of His being more than one, and that infinity cannot really be numerically one. In like manner, infinity is without allness. It is most important—it is indispensable—to have a right conception of this, that God is absolutely infinite, and that, therefore, he is neither one nor more than one; that what is possesses endlessness, and has, therefore, no allness. Besides the words *one* and *all,* the word *system* is misleading. People speak of the system of the universe. But a system is a *oneness* with co-ordination and relativity of parts; and the universe, being endless, cannot possess system.

50. There is nothing but God, as we have found; but we would fain, if possible, know God; and we cannot know Him simply by knowing what He is *not.* The knowing what

He is not is only, as it were, a clearing of the ground for establishing what he is; it is useful for removing misapprehension.

51. All that is known to man is nature and spirit; but nature is unconscious, or, in the animals, instinctively-conscious, spirit; and, as like is known only to like, it is thus only that self-conscious spirit can know nature. What we know of being done in the universe of any value is the production of spirits. If there were only one human spirit in the universe, and no other spirit, we saw that infinite nature would sink into insignificance in his presence, or be significant only in as far as it was of service to him. But there is this also in human spirits, as we saw—that they are capable of thinking *perfectly* or, which in this case is the same thing, *infinitely,* and they are, therefore, infinite in their very *nature,* infinite and eternal in their very *kind,* and they may, therefore, be well called children of God. In relation to the time-world, spirits rise and vanish, but that which was other in kind than those spirits could not produce them; God therefore is spirit, and may properly be named the Infinite Source of Spirits or, better, the Infinite Father of Spirits. As we cannot know nature out of ourselves, nor another spirit out of ourselves, so we cannot know God out of ourselves, or as other than Spirit and the Father of Spirits. But to know God as Spirit and the Father of Spirits is for spirits to know God. And though "children," "source," and "father" are metaphors, we have already seen that it is by metaphor that spiritual things are named—"spirit" itself indeed being a metaphor, originally meaning *breath.* But we say *Infinite* Father: God is therefore both known and unknown.

52. But finite spirits, finite in attained degree, though possessing an unlimitedness as kind, are personal. Is God

also personal, self-conscious? Does He know Himself and what He is about? Does He know all things?

53. You have arrived at what seems the abyss of abysses, which, however, you must try to fathom; for you are spirit, and spirit is, as was long since truly said, that which is capable; this agrees also with Paul: "The spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God." We saw that there was what ineffably transcended design, and that this belonged to God. God therefore possesses what ineffably transcends knowledge and what ineffably transcends love. But *what* is is God; and God is the infinite possession of Himself. It is simply to degrade the idea of God to say that He, considered in Himself as an object of contemplation to finite spirits, *designs* this and that, *knows* this and that, *loves* this and that. Realize the idea of God's knowledge by an example. Does God know all the spiders in the universe? Does He know how many there are of them, the exact age and size and weight of each, their different degrees of relationship, and what degree of relationship each bears to every other spider that ever has been, is, or will be? Does He know how many webs each has made, and when and where, and of how many meshes each consisted? Does he know all the flies that each spider has devoured, the exact age, size, and weight of each fly, how many and what gyrations each fly made in the air, and when, where, and on what noses each alighted? In short, does God know the biography of each fly from its birth till devoured by a spider and all other particulars of possible information regarding every spider in the universe and its food? We have chosen the spider as being a very respectable insect compared with many; we leave it to the reader to think of all the other insects that ever have been, are, or will be throughout the universe, and of all their genealogies, and of the biography and history of every insect and its race—where they crawled, flew, or swam, when,

and for what; what eggs they laid, when, and where—from the histories of the wars of the red and white ants down to the biographies of animalculae and infusoria. But this after all is only a popular and representative way of reasoning. Remember that God, considered as the Universal Spirit and Infinite Father of Spirits, simply *is:* He is not growing old; He has not been; He will not be. He is the *I am.* Insects are coming to be and passing away. He is not the God of flies; they are subjects of death; and, as Jesus said, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

54. God, then, considered as the Infinite, is not personal, and neither thinks nor loves; but God is what is, and, therefore, He is personal, inasmuch as He thinks and loves in man, that is to say, in all finite spirits. We have seen that, though finite, these spirits possess a ground of infinity, and are therefore capable of knowing and loving God.

55. But God is not personal, and that just *because he is more than personal.* Personality is self-conscious; but personality is self-conscious only because it is conscious of what is not itself—that is, it is conscious only because it is finite. But God is infinite; therefore, God is not self-conscious. He does not think and know, and that just *because He more than thinks and knows;* He does not love, and that just *because He more than loves.* It is of the utmost importance to understand this, and also to understand that God is *unnameable* in exact scientific language—for to use negatives is not adequately to name.

56. There are two, and only two, kinds of human language: scientific language and poetic language. There is the ordinary popular language, but, on examination, it is found to be poetic language, which by much use has become abstract and dull, having lost its original color and concrete-

ness. Scientific language aims at a perfectly adequate expres sion of its object; it is the language of cold intelligence and "dry light." Poetic language aims at an approximate expression of what is unsusceptible of adequacy—namely, feeling and passion; it is the language of moist light. Now, our inquiry is in regard to all revelation; and we found the importance and necessity of language in man's self-realization—that is, in the revealing of himself to himself, which is the only possible revelation of God. For we found that man's world is a world within, whether in regard to so-called nature or to spirit. Individuals grow in spirit, and learn to transmit by language—to their families and tribes and nations—their spiritual acquisitions; the after-comers do the same; thus age after age starts advantageously in comparison with the foregoing because it has much of the experience of the foregoing; and so the revelation of God to man, or man's self-realization, proceeds forever. In the course of time, writing is invented, and the more powerful minds commit to writing for the benefit of posterity their noblest thoughts and inspirations. Some of these are so splendid that they are hailed as divine, and so the world has its Bible. One of these surpasses all the rest, the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, and is held by the most advanced nations at the present day to be the revealed Word of God.

57. Now, all that exists is nothing but God, and a revelation of God. We have exploded the foolish mechanical notion of design in regard to God, and in so doing we virtually exploded also the notion of a mechanical revelation. There is no adaptation of means to ends in nature or spirit; there is no mechanical joining or nailing anywhere: there is one (what we may *call* one) life, in infinite variety: there is, in the luminous words of the Metaphysician and Poet, James Hutchison Stirling, *that which could not but be.*

58. From the truths which we have already discovered, it

follows that there *must* be a revelation of God in writing, for writing is a form of language, and language is the means by which man categorizes and thinks, the means by which he realizes himself; every good book will be in its degree such a revelation. Now, if there is any book in existence which man has been enabled to write in the course of his development, which clearly reveals the way to the highest height, and which reveals how we may become actually and consciously what from the first unconsciously and ideally we are—"partakers of the Divine Nature," then that book can never be superseded. It is entitled, by its final superiority, to be called, what it really is, the Word of God. But, more than that, it follows necessarily from the truths we have discovered that, if such a book does not now exist, it must exist in the course of man's development. The question, then, is: *Does* such a book exist? We answer, without hesitation or a trace of doubt, It does, and it is the Christian Bible.

59. There lies before me at this moment on the table a copy of the Bible. Is that the Word of God? It is neither the word of God nor of man. It is only a little mass of matter, composed of paper, and ink, and paste, and pasteboard, and thread, and leather. It contains not a single thought nor feeling. What a violent metaphor, then, to call *that* the word of God (which term indeed were a metaphor in any case)!

60. "Ah," you will exclaim, "but look at the signs of thought and feeling in ink." True; but they are merely *signs.* The writers, all of them, took all their thoughts and feelings away with them; they could not part with them; and it is to speak metaphorically and poetically to say that anyone *communicates* his feeling or thought by word, oral or written, or by any other sign. No thought or feeling ever was or can be imparted, strictly and scientifically speaking. Do not think this distinction fantastic; you will find it im-

mediately to be of vast importance! So important that a full consideration of it will throw a light into and upon your nature such as you have never seen before and higher than which you can never see again. The thought of Isaiah remained Isaiah's; the thought of Paul remained his. No virtue of thought went out of them by speaking or writing. On the contrary, their thought rather became for the first time fully their own by giving it a form in writing or in speech. If I truly read their writings, the thoughts that arise in my mind are mine, though they are exactly the same as the thoughts that were in their minds. We have already seen in a former section that spiritual possessions cannot be divided.

61. Reading is reproduction, and reproduction would be impossible unless mind were one. It is God in every spirit that enables each of us to have thoughts which are also another's, and without lessening in the slightest his possession. But by what means do we reproduce the thoughts of another, whatever may be the sign used by him? By categorization, and by that alone. You can only read, you can only think, to the extent to which you have mastered categories. If you have a vague notion of a category, you think vaguely under it; if you have a clearer notion of it, you think more clearly; if a perfect notion, you can think perfectly.

62. If the Bible writers, then, were inspired by God, they necessarily took their inspiration—that is to say, their thoughts and feelings—away with them, and left only dead signs of those living feelings and thoughts. Whoever, by means of category, partially or perfectly mastered, reproduces partially or perfectly those thoughts and feelings is inspired by God to the extent of that reproduction, as truly as the Bible writers were. As it is written, "The inspiration of the Almighty giveth man understanding." Whoever understands is inspired by God to the extent to which he

understands. And remember that your thought is equally your own whether it took origin first in your own mind or another's: it cannot be *given* to you; it can only *rise* in you in accordance with its own nature.

63. To a child who has yet not been taught the four quarters, East, West, North, and South, nor what a village is, you say nothing by saying that such and such a village is in the North or elsewhere. These categories must first be known to the child if the child is to understand. It is the same with everything else, without exception. A child of five may pronounce correctly the following words, a verse of Euripides quoted by Paul: "Evil communications corrupt good manners"; but no child of five ever understood them, for these five words involve five great categories, of which none can be mastered by a child of five. And, in passing, it may be remarked that the Christian apostle, in borrowing that verse from the heathen poet, showed what *his* view of inspiration was: if it had not been inspired in the play where first it was written, the mechanical transference of it to the sacred page would certainly not give it that characteristic.

64. It follows that the Bible is not quite the same book to the same man for two years together, and that it differs immensely to men in widely different stages of culture—as practically we see. For, by the exercise of category in different degrees, men in using the Bible unlock the springs of thought and feeling, not in the Bible, which is dead ink and paper, but in themselves, who are living spirits.

65. The Bible is a volume containing some of the most amusing and instructive traditionary tales ever written of times before the period of history: histories, an epic, a pastoral song, other poems and songs, a collection of proverbs, a moral treatise, biographies, epistles, and a mystic

prose-poem. Here is a great literature, extending from before the time of Moses till after the time of Christ, showing, as no literature showed before, or perhaps ever can show again, the development of spirit—from its first instinctive state to its culmination in conscious union with God. This conscious union took place in the person of Jesus Christ, whose life and teaching render that conscious union possible to every other man, if he will be true to the divine message.

66. The Bible is, then, anything but one book, except insofar as the bookbinder makes it one; and yet it *is* one in the very highest sense—in respect of its so wonderfully illustrating that growth of spirit to which we have referred. But the growth of spirit is, by transcending itself through ever new reaches of self-realization, a growth which proceeds by contradiction and opposition, without which there can be no energy. To see lower thoughts of God superseded by higher is, then, what we might expect, and not a cut-and-dry revelation once for all. And what we might expect, that we find. Nay, we find that would fill us with horror, as the most hideous blasphemy, if we read it for the first time in manhood, after having thought of God from childhood in the high manner in which the best minds of the nineteenth century think of him. We shall give a few examples of this. God is represented as sending Moses to Pharaoh, again and again, with orders to let the children of Israel go, under pretense that they were going only for the purposes of performing a religious service to the Lord their God, and with the intention, of course, of returning after performing it. He is represented as sending Moses with threats of grievous plagues for disobedience, which He actually brings upon the king in consequence of his disobedience, while all the time He hardens the king's heart in order that he should disobey, to give Him an opportunity of producing those

plagues: "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt." Putting aside the pretense, surely very unworthy, according to our notions of today, even if He had not been able to send a spirit of deep sleep on Pharaoh and all the Egyptians for forty-eight hours or so, which would have done the business most effectively, let us ask, What would we think of a man who, not being a lunatic, should call his horse to the right, pull him to the left, and then, at his own sweet will, whip him violently for not going to the right? Instead of saying, "Has not the potter power over the clay?" we would give intimation to the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and the just plague to the man would be, by Christian law, imprisonment, with bread of affliction and water of affliction, for a certain number of days, and, if he were a person of any education or property, without the option of a fine. A plague, juster still, though illegal, would be a good horse-whipping. Again, the Lord is represented as saying in those circumstances to Moses: "Speak now in the ears of the people and let every man borrow of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver and jewels of gold." You see that the conception of God at that stage of the development of spirit among the children of Israel was very unworthy and very low. But what shall we say of the representation of God by the prophet Micaiah, the son of Imlah? He says he saw the Lord on His throne sending down a spirit to tempt Ahab to his ruin by means of lies. "Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be

a lying Spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth and do so." What shall we say of this? Or of that command of God to Ezekiel, with which we will not defile our English tongue? As to the latter, let us say nothing unless we exclaim with the prophet himself, "Ah, Lord God." And as to the former, does it not seem, if Satan were once a spirit of light, and one of the host of heaven, and fell, that he had not very far to fall? The prologue in heaven in Goethe's *Faust* is mild in comparison with this matter of Ahab. The Jove of Homer, after threatening, like a modern coal-heaver, but only more elegantly, to beat his wife, sends a lying dream to Agamemnon, but, though this is gross enough, it is far indeed from being so scandalizing as the story of the Lord sending the lying spirit. Again, God is represented as *laughing* when he sees the day of the wicked coming. Homer represents the immortal gods as laughing inextinguishably at Vulcan; bustling about and pouring out nectar, but this laughter was genial and humane, not sarcastic, still less diabolical, as we now would properly hold laughter at the destruction of the wicked to be. The conception of God was sadly low in those days even in the best minds.

67. It is no pleasure to us to make these remarks, for they are apt to be misunderstood by the meaner spirits, who catch at anything that seems to degrade what is high and reverend and holy—and if there is anything high and reverend and holy in the world, it is the Bible. But the course of our great argument demands such remarks, and it is the common, vulgar defenders of the Bible, understanding nothing of the nature of spirit or what a true notion of divine revelation implies, who—by "lying for God" and attempting to establish an external harmony in the Bible, not only where no such harmony exists, but where none such is possible, or *ought* to be—are the worst enemies of the Bible and of revela-

tion, and, therefore, of the human soul in its highest interests. There is no such God as those foolish, vulgar defenders imagine, and therefore no such revelation as they ignorantly fancy. It was to be expected that there should be furious contradictions, as well as blunders and misstatements, in the Bible, and we find them there in abundance. For the Bible was not dictated by God to its writers, as a man dictates documents to his secretaries; eternal reason arose within, like a little seed in the coarse, gross earth, and struggled forward into the light, and it grew for long ages and stood all trials for tempest and drought, till it blossomed and became seed again (small like a grain of mustard-seed) in the person of Jesus Christ. It is racy of the soil, and it bears the mark of its circumstances in all the course of its development. But if in the seed the tree ideally already is, so it is with this also; and the moral tree, standing at last as complete in the person of Christ, is only the development of what was there from the beginning: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." But Christ could come only in the "fullness of time," just as it is in the fullness of time that the perfect blossom and new seed can come, for what is deepest in is last to emerge. The endurance and trials of the tree have no history; but, in the case of spirit, it is different, and we shall greatly err if, in the history, we either take for or confound with the transcendent thing itself what was there only for the very purpose of being transcended.

68. Some gross and even abominable representations of God are, as we have seen, contained in the Bible. The reader should therefore not be surprised at any other error or contradiction, but should endeavor to elevate his mind to a true conception of what revelation *must* be in accordance with the nature of spirit. Let him remove from his mind the

foolish prejudices and superstitions in which he has been educated; first, let him examine closely the doctrine of the Fall of Man, which was taught by Paul, and which even appears to a careless reader to be taught in the beginning of the book of Genesis, but which is, on the whole, not a Bible doctrine and certainly not a doctrine of Christ's. Paul was, for his time and country, a thorough-bred reasoner and by nature he had, besides, strong philosophical tendencies. Such a man usually endeavors to work his ideas into system. In doing so, he is greatly tempted to press into his service whatever seems to work for him; the more earnest and practical he is in regard to life, the less examination he uses, and to this temptation he generally succumbs. Paul succumbed to this temptation as miserably as any man, inspired or uninspired, could well do. In speaking of the universal corruption of human nature, he tries to confirm the doctrine by this quotation from the Psalms: "There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." On referring to the Psalm itself, however, in either of its two editions, the Fourteenth Psalm or the Fifty-third Psalm (and it is for the mechanical theorists to explain why the Holy Spirit should give two editions of this psalm, and, while they are about it, they may just as well explain why some psalms are, like the Lamentations of Jeremiah, written in curious acrostics, and others not, and why Jeremiah failed to carry out his acrostic plan in verses sixteenth and seventeenth of the Fourth Lamentation), we find that the Psalmist had no such thought as the universal corruption of human nature in his head. He is thinking only of the very general corruption of mankind; and, as poets do, he speaks in the language of exaggeration and passion: "God looked down from heaven," says he, "upon the children of men, to see if there were any that

did understand, that did seek God." He poetically, but unscientifically, represents God as ignorant, as seeking for information in regard to the subjects of His ignorance, and as being surprised and disappointed at finding men immensely worse than He would have expected. "Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." God, Who, if man were fallen, would know that human nature was corrupted, did not need to look down from heaven to ascertain it. But the conclusion of the psalm shows clearly what was the writer's purpose. He continues, putting these words into the mouth of God: "Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? Who eat up my people as they eat bread." The substance of the Psalm, then, is, in plain prose, this: The workers of iniquity are overwhelmingly numerous in comparison with the people of God. Now, in the name of spirit, before which even the apostle Paul shrinks into insignificance, I think we should look well after the correctness of the doctrine of a man who can make such an alarming blunder as this; and this blunder is even exceeded, if possible, by the continuation of his quotation from another psalm.

69. That Christ did not believe in the universal corruption of human nature is evident from the parable of the sower. The kingdom of heaven is like a sower going forth to sow seed, and some falls on good ground, which Christ explains to his disciples to mean "a good and honest heart."

70. It remains for us to examine the account of the Fall in Genesis and to look at the rest of the Bible in relation to this supposed Bible doctrine. In the earliest histories of nations there is a traditionary period, before the beginning of history, strictly so-called, which contains prodigies and miracles mixed up with accounts of events that probably had a basis in actuality (many of those prodigies and mira-

cles, too, may have had for their origin an actual ground of misinterpreted fact). This period may be called the nation's childhood, when inexperience and ignorance are nearly perfect, and simplicity and delight in wonder great, and when belief is capacious enough to receive almost anything with an easy grasp. As childhood shows the man, so the childhood of a nation shows the genius of that nation—a fact which renders its earliest traditionary tales of great importance. The earliest traditions of the Hebrews mark its genius in a wonderful manner. The stories of a lost Paradise (commonly called the Fall), of the Flood, of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, etc. are remarkably significant of the people which, of all peoples, has had, in one word, *righteousness* for its chief aim. These stories give, as it were, lisping utterance to the true philosophy: that the universe—which, to the vulgar eye, is a coarse physical system where spirit is a curious accident to be accounted for, and to the pedantic eye is an intellectual system—is moral.

71. The Lord God, in the charming myth of the origin of humanity, is said to have formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that he became a living soul. Having planted a garden eastward in Eden, he put the man in it to keep it, with permission to eat of every tree in it except one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, under penalty of death without a day's delay. Then the Lord God brought every beast of the field and every fowl of the air to Adam, to see what he would call them, and he gave them all names—fish, which are the birds of the water (as birds are the fish of the air), not having the honor of being mentioned, their presence doubtless being excused on the score of extreme inconvenience. All animals had mates but Adam; and the Lord God, seeing that it was not good for him to be alone, caused a deep sleep to fall upon him, took one of his ribs and closed up the

flesh thereof, made a woman out of the bone, and brought her to Adam. Adam said (and it is the first good guess on record), "This is now bone of my bone," but he added, with a pardonable mistake, "and flesh of my flesh." And they went about naked without shame. After what has just been said, it ought not to surprise the reader to learn that the serpent talked in those days, and very good Hebrew by what appears, nothing behind Adam and Eve themselves, though whether with a slightly hissing accent is not recorded, and we should not be wise above what is written. The serpent said to Eve, who had apparently been saying something to him in Adam's absence about the restrictions they were under in regard to the tree of knowledge (and she would naturally enough be glad of his conversation in the circumstances), "Yea, has God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" And upon Eve repeating the divine injunction and threat, the serpent said, "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." The serpent seems to have known, like De Quincey and others, that women are naturally aristocratical, as well as curious. Eve liked the look of the fruit very much, took some of it, and gave some of it to her husband; and the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they made themselves aprons. When they heard the Lord God walking in the garden, they hid themselves from his presence. On being questioned, the man blamed the woman, and the woman the serpent. "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shall thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy

conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it thou wast taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shall thou return." And the Lord God made coats of skin, and clothed them. "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil, and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of Life."

72. Now though this story is one which, on the very face of it, to any one who has drunk of the true spirit of literature shows its origin perfectly, there are many men who even yet are capable of believing it, many more who are capable of believing that they believe it, and still more who are incapable of saying that they do not believe it. We intend to help these three classes of persons by a close examination of the story.

73. When we read in the greatest and most earnest authors of ancient and modern times of talking trees and of men being seen carrying their heads in their hands for lanterns and of Care sitting on a horse behind the horseman, etc., we know where we are; we know that these great men

wrote simply in order to tell us the *truth,* and that they cared for nothing else, not even for fact. For mere facts are not truths. Or, if you say of them, with the clown in *Measure for Measure,* "Here be truths," let such truths be called "Truths of the Threepence Fruit-Dish," or "Truths of the Lower Chair" (See Act II, Scene 1). It is not truth that a Bible lies before me at this moment on the table, though it is a fact; nor would I increase in your mind the number of truths, or fatten your soul at all, but simply increase the number of your facts, and leave your soul exactly where it was, were I to tell you that it is a paragraph Bible, that it was bought in the year 1860, that it cost a friend of mine four shillings and sixpence, and that it is covered with leather. Nay, I only border upon truth, without reaching it, when I tell you that at the 193rd Psalm there is pasted on the margin by his hand a wild daisy not plucked by him on a certain day, that there are three words in his handwriting saying whose favorite Psalm that was, and that the water has doubtless stood in his eyes when he read: "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone: and the place thereof shall know it no more." And even this regarding our frame is not truth, but only fact; but we reach truth immediately if we continue the quotation, where thought comes to comfort love giving way to grief: "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them." Here we have both truth and fact. But if you open the Song of Solomon, you will find Truth laughing at Fact, and this is the very manner of Truth, her delight and joy. In laughing she does not lose her character for a moment; quite the contrary, it is then that her character shines at its brightest in that fairest coun-

tenance of hers—when she sports with Fact, which she thinks to be often a very dull, stupid, soulless creature; and so she often sports with it, and laughs at it, and though she always uses it, she often, bravado-like, or in fun-earnest, as if to show that she could almost do without it, abuses it also, wherever she can find a true poet for a mouthpiece. In the Song of Solomon, you find it written merrily: "King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon. He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, *the midst thereof being paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem.*"

74. On opening my Bible to the last quotation, I saw the words: "The mountains of Bether." A fancy striking me, I took a slip of paper and wrote a song, which, as it happens to illustrate what we have just been saying, I shall here insert for the reader's recreation, before we resume our argument. It was made almost as fast as my pen could write it down, but time has little to do with these things. It is written in the very spirit of the Song of Solomon, and is, like it, susceptible of a religious meaning, which the reader is welcome, though not advised, to give to it. If any exceeding grave, matter-of-fact man, nearly as stupid as mere sober Fact itself, whose whole life perhaps is but a truth of the Lower Chair, should, in the interests of what he foolishly fancies to be religion, think my Song *too-too,* I shut the door of his face upon his tongue at once, by quoting what he, if a believer in mechanical inspiration, must consider to be the recommendation and advice, if not command, of God himself: "Rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love." And now having, by Divine authority, silenced the rash and ignorant censure of pure and simple-hearted innocence, here, friend, is my pretty little song, like a song of birds "that do among the

branches sing with delectation," and which every future bridegroom should have by heart:

There are hills that are white, there are hills that are green;
Rough and hard are the most, wherever I've been,
But smooth hills there are, and here they are seen
Rising soft from each side of a valley between:
I am drunk with delight of the vision.

Perfection that fashioned, with pride whispers, "Lo,
Where the might and the magic of beauty may go
Here the heart through the eyes deep-enraptured may know!"

And the valley and hills are white as with snow,
But I feel them and find them all aglow,
The Snow is alive and warm, and so
I wonder no more that pinks should grow—
And a prettier pair of pinks I trow
The green lap of April cannot show
Than the two on the top that sweetly blow
In the snow of the hills of division.

Could anything be *truer* than this song?

75. In the story of a lost paradise (absurdly called the Fall of man), the speaking serpent alone ought to show to what category of stories it belongs, not to mention the Lord God walking about, making a man out of dust, and a woman out of bone, nor to mention the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, nor the tree of life, nor the curious fact that all four, the Lord God, the serpent, the man, and the woman, speak the same language without having learned it. The Lord God walking about, and making man so, is no longer the Infinite and Eternal, but is a little object in space and time. He plants a garden *eastward:* well, at his back there

is an infinite *westward* in a straight line in space, which he never can have explored, and which, had he been exploring it at the rate (in such a relation, the wretchedly poor rate) of a million million myriad myriad leagues a moment, for any number of ages and aeons, would still be an infinite westward in a straight line in space unexplored and unexplorable by him; whilst in front of him beyond the garden there is an infinite eastward, and to his left and right an infinite northward and southward equally unexplored and unexplorable. Such a being never could know that he was chief in the universe. Nay, ten hundred thousand millions, or any number, of such beings, possessing and possessed in forms, however vast, stationed at equal distances apart all round a globe, and taking flight together on a voyage of exploration through the universe each in a straight line, flying at the rate of a million million myriad myriad leagues at every waft of wing, could never discover whether there were not a greater such God than this Lord God of the garden. For they would always be only at the beginning of their flight, while each day, too, would increase the growing space between each by inconceivable unexplored distances. There is, therefore, no possible God in the sense represented in the fable of a lost paradise; as, indeed, we formerly demonstrated. The true God is the object of pure thought, and not an object of the imagination or of the senses. After saying this, we need not pursue the absurdities of a man and woman, big babies of one day old, speaking and thinking before they had learned to think and speak, with ready-made characters made a present to them as one gets the present of a gold watch, and with such characters, too, that their moral shoulders are supposed strong enough to have laid upon them the responsibility of a world's woe and welfare. It was, however, but natural that ready-made characters should yield at the very first trial. Character that is worth anything is of a slow growth, as all things are that stand well and long.

76. With regard to the meaning of the story, it is certain that the inventor of it, whoever he was (it is possible that Moses might get it, or one like it, from the Egyptian priests), did not intend to say that man lost heaven and won hell by disobedience to God. For the doctrines of heaven and hell were not only unknown to him, but to Moses also, and to the Jews generally of the Old Testament, since to them even the doctrine of a future life was unknown. Moses never says to the Jews, as he was bound to say if he had known it, "Do good and you will go to heaven when you die; but if you do evil you will go to hell." He gives, however, the best encouragement and warning that he can. He does not even say to them, "Take care; there may possibly be a future life; and who knows what rewards, and punishments may be in store for you?" What he says is this: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that he shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it." Success in this life only, you see, is all that Moses has to offer as the result of loving the Lord their God, of walking in his ways, and of keeping his commandments and his statutes and his judgments. It never entered into the mind of Moses that man is immortal, and this entirely agrees with the story of the loss of paradise. There it is expressly taught that man is but breathing dust, and that, when his breath is out, he returns to it, and that, though originally capable of immortality, the way to the tree of eternal life is barred as by cherubim and a flaming sword. The doctrine of immor-

tality is a growth of much later date. We see, then, how erroneous is the doctrine of the Fall of Man as it is commonly held by the unreflecting. It is nowhere taught in Scripture, except by St. Paul; and the reason why it was taught by him has already been explained. It must be plain to the intelligent, and even to the unintelligent, reader, that if it had been held by the other Scripture writers, it would have frequently been referred to in the Bible. It is especially absurd to suppose that the story of the lost paradise meant for Moses that Adam, by eating the forbidden fruit, made himself and his race liable not only to the miseries of this life, but to the pains of hell-fire forever, when we see, by what he says to the children of Israel, that he must have believed that when he and they died their souls would go out like so many candles.

77. Bacon wrote a little book in which he shows that the mythological fables of Greece contain a vast amount of profound wisdom. In the noble preface to it, he says: "Fables in general are composed of ductile matter, that may be drawn into great variety by a witty talent or an inventive genius, and be delivered of plausible meanings which they never contained. But this procedure has already been carried to excess; and great numbers, to procure the sanction of antiquity to their own notions and inventions, have miserably wrested and abused the fables of the ancients." Again: "It were very injudicious to suffer the fondness and licentiousness of a few to detract from the honor of allegory and parable in general. This would be rash, and almost profane; for, since religion delights in such shadows and disguises, to abolish them were, in a manner, to prohibit all intercourse betwixt things human and divine." Again: "Some of these fables are so absurd and idle in their narration as to show and proclaim an allegory, even afar off." He regards those fables, not as the inventions of those who re-

late them, "but as sacred relics, gentle whispers, and the breath of better times, that from the traditions of more ancient nations came, at length, into the flutes and trumpets of the Greeks." And again he says, "In the first ages, when such inventions and conclusions of the human reason as are now trite and common were new and little known all things abounded with fables, parables, similes, comparisons, and allusions, which were not intended to conceal, but inform and teach, whilst the minds of men continued rude and unpracticed in matters of subtility and speculation, or even impatient and in a manner uncapable of receiving such things as did not directly fall under and strike the senses. For as hieroglyphics were in use before writing, so were parables in use before arguments. And even to this day, if any man would let new light in upon the human understanding, and conquer prejudice, without raising contests, animosities, opposition, or disturbance, he must still go in the same path, and have recourse to the like method of allegory, metaphor, and allusion."

78. These excellent remarks of Bacon on ancient fables will, if well considered, throw great light upon the story of a lost paradise. For that story is, with its speaking serpent, etc., so absurd and idle in its narration as to proclaim an allegory at the distance of a mile. It was invented, not for the purpose of concealing, but for revealing, truth to the simple minds of a rude, unreflecting age. It is composed of ductile matter, and can be drawn out into a great variety of plausible meanings which it does not contain. And yet under its shadows and disguises, under its "monstrous fiction," it certainly discourses of things divine, which are "singularly great and noble." It contains the sacred relics of what the earliest philosophy tried to teach bewildered man. What that teaching was, so far as this fable is concerned, we think it easy enough to discover.

79. From what we have shown to be the nature of spirit, the reader knows that long ages had passed away before man would attempt to account for his existence, and for his manner of existence, and that there would be many unconscious attempts at it before there was any clearly conscious attempt. The first unconscious attempt of value would be made by a man who was potentially a great poet, and as the very nature of spirit is truth as well as freedom (and it is only freedom because truth), this first attempt would, for its time, contain a noble portion of truth, virtually the seed of the whole truth. Men in general would not be able to recognize it, just as men in general are always unable to recognize the highest truth of their own time, but the spirits of the same order, few in number but all-important, like the leaders of all ages, would hail the light. The new truth would be canvassed and contradicted by prosaic spirits, and, as is its nature, it would grow by contradiction and conflict. Its attempts to unfold and express itself would become more and more conscious. Men would begin to feel and see that there was a power in the universe of a most beneficent nature on the whole; that the wonderful lamp of day never once failed, but was faithful every morning; that the moon and stars had their times; that the nature of man was unspeakably above that of the beasts of the field, which, with all other things, seemed as if made for him. They would see, too, that there are in nature earthquakes, tempests, wild beasts, etc., and in man, himself, murder and other evils—disorder without and disorder within—under the eyes of a power on the whole beneficent and, manifestly, so great as to be equal to anything. What could they think? Their problem was: How is it that this beneficent power can allow such things? Profoundly meditating on the matter, it struck the great believing heart of some poet one day that it was not always so, that it could not always have been so, that the great beneficent power must have made man for bliss, and that the fault is all in

man somehow. And how? How but by disobedience? The power must have meant it to be wholly well with his creatures; he could not have meant that man was to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, and especially he could not have put thistles and thorns there just for the very purpose of being in his way; nor surely could he have meant originally that woman was to suffer so in childbirth. Look at the happiness of the child, when everything is provided for it—happy in its ignorance; such an ignorant happiness the beneficent power must have meant for man, with work only for amusement—something pleasant to create a good appetite, perhaps such as keeping a garden. The child's grief begins with and increases with its knowledge. Ah! it is with *knowledge* that man's grief must have begun. How curious to know men are, and women still more so!—especially things forbidden. The acquisition of some forbidden knowledge must have been the beginning of all evils, and the first woman would probably be the first to seek that knowledge. Yes, I see the truth, *that* must have been it. But created to be naturally obedient, how could she do it? She must have been misled. But by whom? How strange that none of the animals can speak, especially the serpent, so very wise as it is. I suspect it could speak at first. I see it. The serpent must have spoken once, but it is now deprived of its gift of speech for cheating the woman, in its malice and envy and guile. That is just. The great power is good. The great power would not always have remained away behind the blue sky; at first, he would talk with and instruct man; but, incensed at his disobedience and ingratitude, he has withdrawn forever to his own grand home, leaving man to his search for knowledge, which in self-defense, as well as for punishment, he must now pursue. Yes, knowledge is grief. But he has not forgotten us altogether. How he thunders when he is angry with us, and darts his terrible lightnings! But his very anger shows that he has not altogether forsaken us. No, he is good,

and for all his anger, he must mean something good for us in the long-run, whatever that good may be. Who can think what it may be? He would not allow himself to be defeated of his purposes by a serpent. He continues us in existence for some great purpose, though every individual of us goes back to the dust; but surely when he first made us, it was to live always. He must have provided means for that. I see it all, I see it all!

80. Some such meditation as this, by some primitive poet, was, indeed, inevitable, when we consider the nature of spirit, which is to endeavor to master its circumstances in all their extent; and we can realize the joy with which he would half-unconsciously embody his meditation in an interesting form, in a great and childlike way, as it has been done in the fable of a lost paradise. His purpose was not to conceal his *truth* (that is to say, what he *trowed,* what he had become convinced of), but to reveal it; and it is easy also to realize how welcome his truth would be to the struggling childlike thought of that early time. That primitive poet would be fully the Tennyson, and his fable fully the *In Memoriam,* of the day, and be hailed as perhaps the high-water mark of thought for all time. And what could his fellows think of one who had such a gift of light in him? He must be inspired by that very being whose anger in the thunder and lightning, as well as complacency in the sunshine, showed that he cared for them. Yes, that being must have meant that we should at last know what his prophet has revealed. So it was natural that they should think, and as true too as natural, for a great poet and spiritual bringer of light is the greatest gift that God can give to the world.

81. But while the poet, more or less consciously (for hitherto thought would be little distinguishable from feeling, or rather would be embedded in it) embodied his mind,

that embodiment would ideally contain more than he intended, and be, as it were, the egg from which winged thought would ultimately emerge. This is a necessity of the nature of spirit; and it might easily, and was likely to, happen that not merely more, but a vast deal more, might be ideally contained in it. We shall now try to see what is in this fable of a lost paradise beyond the poet's intention; we shall do this without in the least incurring Bacon's censure for drawing the ductile material to suit our fancies and preconceived opinions. We shall abide by what seems the strictest necessity of thought, far remote indeed from the region of mere opinion and fancy.

82. Beings newly created, as Adam and Eve are represented, in the forms of a full-grown man and woman would still be really babies, and the idea of such beings able to think at all, not to mention speaking, is inconceivably absurd. If you fancy some supernatural power thinking and speaking in them, even if that were possible, then they were not really persons but puppets. But, for our occasion, let us think of them just as they are represented—that is to say, as thinking in some degree and speaking like young children. They are happy, but their happiness is that of childhood, and they can only think and speak as children. Children enjoy such a paradise under the protection of their parents, caring nothing for their defects—that is, naked and yet not ashamed, as Adam and Eve enjoyed under the protection of the Lord God. They do not yet know good and evil, though their parents know them, who are as gods to them, therefore; and as soon as they begin to know good and evil, their eyes are opened, they die, and they are as if *driven* out of their paradise. Their eyes are opened, they see their defects, their wants; they die, the happy life of childhood can no longer be theirs; and time itself, with its inevitable stride, drives them out of their ignorant innocent condition.

But this is an advance. It is impossible to *know* good except by evil, or evil except by good. If the big boy and girl, Adam and Eve, were to be developed at all, a process of development must be gone through, and a permanent state of animal innocence and enjoyment could not furnish the means of it; they must, like the rest of us, fall to rise, and die to live. But that this should be, there must be restraint, law. The mere animals, a dog or a horse, cannot die to live morally: they are all alive without the law, and no commandment can come to them that the consciousness of restraint should create in them all manner of concupiscence, that sin should live in them, and they die. They do not stand between a higher and a lower, like Adam and Eve and like every other child; and it is because they cannot die, that they cannot live. To begin to know good and evil, therefore, is the first necessary step towards the development of spirit, towards a higher life, which can only be attained by the loss of a child's-paradise, and by grief and struggle. The life of the child, like the life of Adam and Eve, is a sensuous life, however pure it may be; it is a life of nature, which has always the first possession. But it is a life in which nature is yet unknown; for to know nature is to develop spirit. The first fault of the child is usually in relation to something forbidden which is not, in its own nature, sinful, just like the forbidden fruit of a tree, and the child cannot run to meet his parent with open-hearted glee as before, though the parent does not yet know of his guilt. On being questioned, the child shifts the blame from his own shoulders to his brother, who told him to do it, and he again to another. Spirit is yet weak: if the child could say ingenuously, without blaming others, "Father, I have done wrong," what a step in the progress of development of spirit would that show, and how bright might the parent's hopes justly be for that strong child! But it is in the nature of spirit that such strength should come late. Spirit must part with mere

nature, subdue nature, and know something of its own grandeur before that. Man must know, not by hearsay, but for himself, a knowledge only to be won by pain, the duality of his nature as dust and divine breath, and declare for the high and renounce the low; but he must know what he renounces, and for what other it is that he renounces it. This belongs not to boyhood, but to manhood, or if in some cases, to adolescence, the stage between, it *ipso facto* shows a certain uncommon ripeness of manhood then.

83. The Lord God in one aspect represents our higher nature, the serpent our lower nature; and, in a struggle between the two, the latter must win at first in order that its head might be bruised at last. For spirit must be free, and it cannot be free, or (which is the same thing) know itself free, till it has tried its strength with every enemy, without and within, and overcome. Accordingly it follows that the Lord God, the higher nature at that stage, must lose, in order to triumph at last. For as heaven is just as high as hell is deep, for man to have eaten of the tree of life before eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would have been to win a low heaven, a child's heaven, a heaven whose innocence would have been the innocence of ignorance, and not of wisdom. And even after the eating of the forbidden tree, the Lord God acted friendly and wisely to protect the tree of life, not forbidden, and therefore not desired—that the cherubim and the flaming sword, by showing as it were what precious thing has been lost or rather not yet gained, might awaken for the tree the desire of all nations, after they had been into the infinite deeps of the hell of divided spirit, but not before. Once the desire for it was great enough, the way to it was as good as open again. Round that tree was the city of God then to be built; for in the midst of the street of it, as it is written there, is now the tree of life.

84. Our lower nature is well described, in the serpent, as "more subtle than any beast of the field that the Lord God had made." It does not and cannot know the dignity of the higher nature, but has towards it as it were an instinctive malice, as soon as there is an antagonism between them through something forbidden. At the stage when the separation between them is yet not wide, and the struggle not begun, the lower nature makes its way by fascinating the higher, through the means of what is then best in the higher. Its whispers, suggestions, promises actuate the spirit to take as it were a first *independent* step; for if that step were one taken wholly trusting in the serpent, it would not essentially differ from one taken wholly trusting the Lord God. It was the serpent's contradiction of the Lord God that gave to Spirit its first freedom, for of necessity the woman had to perform a spiritual act, namely, to *decide* one way or the other. Mechanical obedience to the Lord God was no longer possible for her. Spirit learns its alphabet and to read a little—n-o, *no*, y-e-s, *yes*—in the school of experience. The Lord God had not warned her of any serpent, and even if He had done so, her knowledge would have been hearsay—that is, not spiritual, but belonging to the senses and the memory. So "when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she"—for all these good reasons, as they seemed to her—"took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." The first and second reasons are purely sensual, but the third and highest reason is only partly so. It is wonderfully expressed: "a tree to be desired to make one wise." What words could better show the first and lowest attempt of spirit at self-development, before it knew itself at all and was as yet not capable of extrication from its opposite, from its lower nature, which, though opposed, is still its own, and there to be used for its development?

85. The first knowledge is a knowledge of "nakedness," of defect and want, and it must precede the invention of arts. "They sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons." It was a first step towards much more than the last Parisian fashion in dress; and when you see a lady, in full sail, gracefully doubling a corner of one of our great streets, "like a stately ship of Tarsus, bound for the isles of Javan or Gadire," or lolling in her chariot, in all the glory of her summer garments, and then think of our poor first parent Eve, and her simple green apron, sewed with needle of thorn and thread of withered grass, you can take her as a type of a great development of spirit in other directions besides that of clothing.

86. A higher development of spirit is suggested by the words: "and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." Ignorant or mechanical obedience under a common master is equality, but the very nature of spiritual development is rule and subordination; and the rule of the husband is the type of the whole development of man's spirit in relation to law and order. The chief of a tribe, the king of a nation, the provost of a city, the captain of a ship, the commander of an army, the chairman of a public meeting, the master of a school, and every rank and degree of rule, may be considered to have their type in the head of the family. But obedience must be slavish before it is free. As free, it is a blessing and not a curse; but man had a long way to go before he could reach the blessing.

87. In addition to what we have already said, let us notice that the Lord God recognizes the truth of the serpent's prophecy, and says, "Behold the man is become as one of us to know good and evil," while His own threat of death is not carried out, and that, therefore, he seems for the time to be in an equivocal position. It is impossible not to be struck

with the prodigious profundity of this fable as embodying an approximately adequate conception of the nature and history of spirit. The Spirit of Denial is the necessary opposite of the Spirit of Affirmation, and the Yes cannot be without the No; the two are one as well as two; and for man to arrive at the Yes is impossible without first experiencing what the No has to offer. If ever man is to arrive at the Yes, and really to know, not by hearsay, but for himself, what is good, he must come to it enriched and strengthened by the suffering and tribulation of the No. All knowledge is frivolous, unimportant, compared with this. To know good and evil is the only way to become god-like; and so implacable love "drove out the man," and "placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." When, through Christ, in the fullness of time, man's spirit, after boundless negation, is capable of boundless affirmation, he will be able to "put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever."

88. The universe, as we have said, is moral; for excellence of character is the highest and best of all possible things in this or in any world. Not merely the possession of wealth, not merely the possession of dry learning, but even genius of intellect itself sinks almost out of sight beneath genius of heart. It is a truth, but ill-expressed, "Heaven kindly gave our blood a moral flow." As if indeed that could have been otherwise! Without such a flow, the whole universe would have been other than it is; for, as we have shown, the universe is what it is by what it is for man. As the highest in man is his moral nature, it must therefore be said that the universe is moral. Another verse is towards the same truth: "An honest man's the noblest work of God." The universe may be said to exist for the production of honest noble spirits. The Jews seized this greatest of all truths as no other na-

tion has done. It goes through all the books of the Bible as the one doctrine—that God, the maker of heaven and earth is righteous, requiring righteousness in His intelligent creatures. They are intelligent in order to be righteous. Intelligence is as the eye; but the very nature of spirit is to achieve freedom by activity, and its eye sees in order that it may do something. Spirit, even when it seems most inert, is active, and is continually expressing itself. It has many modes of doing this. First of all is the body, as Spenser Platonising sings, "The soul is form and doth the body make." It is because your spirit made your face that your face is significant of it, and your face is not the less significant because it was made unconsciously in your mother's womb, according to the nature of your race, by the terrible laws of the blood. The show of your countenance witnesses in your favor or against you. You are not free from the exercise of moral laws even in your sleep. The center of your being within, and the well-spring and fountain of your blood, as well as its function, are bound by moral laws to the whole universe every moment of the night and day, laws that are spirit and execute themselves with an irresistible power and with an unerring vigilance that leave nothing to be desired. You never talked with a neighbor, you never walked along a street, you never read a newspaper, you never exercised one of your senses, you never did anything, materially or spiritually, or left anything undone, without, in some degree or other, the reward or punishment of moral law. Yourself, and your life is every smallest part thereof, are but illustrations of the inevitable power of moral law. Your face, your manners, your gait, your tone, your speech, your silence, your breathing, your accent, your choice of words, your emphasis, your smile, your laughter, what you will and what you will not smile or laugh at, your sneering and its characteristics, your earnest, your jest, your clothes, your house, your furniture, your books, your husband, your wife, your children,

your companions—all these, and all else of yours, are significant of you, by the prevalence of moral law, penetrating every minutest portion of all your being, from before birth, from the very moment even that you entered the universe—the kingdom (to use again the simple but grand words of Stirling) of That Which Could Not But Be. You cannot hide from it for a moment, it is in you; you cannot flee from its presence, it is behind and before and above and below you. The attempt even to do so, the thought even of doing so, would leave its cowardly mark deep in your spirit. The wings of the morning are there for *it,* and fly towards it as they leave it behind. Everything, therefore, both natural and intelligent, exists for the moral. The universe is moral.

89. We are now in a position to ascertain that Christianity is in very deed not only revealed religion, but the highest religion that ever can be revealed. But what is Christianity? It is the full revelation of a method whereby man may attain the highest perfection of his being. It is essential that we should ignore the various claims of different churches to represent Christianity, and examine only the teaching and example of Jesus himself. Now, he never says, If any man would be my disciple, let him believe in the Trinity, or in Transubstantiation, or in Adult Baptism, or in Immortality, or in any other doctrine whatever be it true or no; his words are these, "If any man would be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me." *That,* says Jesus, constitutes discipleship, and not the holding of these or those doctrines. It is not to deny yourself this or the other thing, or even *all* things: it is to deny *yourself.* Christ denied himself, and took up his cross daily. But in denying himself, he attained the highest perfection of his nature, and by following him, that is to say, by doing what he did, you can attain the highest perfection of yours. But what is it to deny oneself? It is to affirm and as-

sert your better self, by opposing and denying your lower self. You say Yes by saying No, and you are *for* by being *against*. Your higher self and lower self are one as well as two. Your higher self could not *will* except for the desires of your lower self. We might say, proverb-like, Multeity of velleity makes a man unlike the Deity. All mere wishes and desires belong to our lower nature, but will belongs to our higher. No man yet ever truly willed to do what was wrong when he did it; he only wished to do it, and his true will was overborne. Christ cries into us, Let your will reign and your spirit will be free. But self-denial is only the beginning, the straight gate, which it requires an agonizing struggle to enter. After entrance, the yoke is easy, the burden light; there is rest for the soul in conscious union with God, here, in this life, in the kingdom of God, which is *within*. The beginning is self-denial, but the end is the affirmation of a new noble self full of God.

90. An open-minded, honest reading of the Gospels will show clearly that this and this alone is Christianity. Christianity, as a life, is conscious union with God, and, as a doctrine, the full revelation of the method of attaining this union. We have merely mentioned the beginning of this method, and for the purpose of our argument, it is not necessary to develop the matter farther. Yet let us say this, that had Christ not loved his enemies, and taught us to love ours, someone would have come after him able to do it, and would have superseded him. But we are engaged with the philosophy of all revelation, and not, except subsidiarily, with any revelation in particular. Our object is to show the unspeakable dignity of human nature by showing that all possible revelation is a revelation of man to himself. The law was a schoolmaster to bring to Christ, who came in the fullness of time, when the world was more or less ready for him. When he came, the man Jesus Christ, he lived, and went

away again, and left nothing of himself here. His thought and feelings were his own, and he took them with him; spiritual things, unlike natural things, cannot be given away. But this is the nature of spirit—to *love* and to *know,* to possess what is incapable of division, though equally possessed by other spirits. But for a spirit to possess is to be; a spirit *is* what he loves and knows; in other words, a spirit realizes himself by love and thought. Christ loved and thought and lived the truth before he could speak the truth and say, "I am the truth." When Pilate asked, "What is truth?" Christ gave him no answer, because he was incapable of understanding the true answer. Truth is spirit and life, and not hearsay and words and definitions. But even hearsay and words and definitions, these comparatively external things, can only be made mine by a previous realization of myself to an extent rendering me capable of making them mine, as already explained.

91. Now, nature, as we know it, is within us; spirit, of course, as only it can be known, is within. We can know nothing except within us. As we said before, it concerns us not whether or no there be a world without us, since we can only know it within. The man Christ Jesus appeared in nature, and said, "I came forth from God," and again, "I came down from Heaven." This—though it is also said, "There was a man sent from God whose name was John"—is generally taken to mean that Christ existed before he was in this world. But to us, in the spirit, if the reader has well understood, it is absolutely of no consequence whatever where he came from or where he went to. If the reader has now, as now he ought to have, his eyes wide open to the Higher Orthodoxy, he will see clearly, that all such questions of an external nature belong only to the Higher Gossip. That Christ came down from Heaven, that he was born of a virgin, that he rose from the dead, that he ascended up

into Heaven, and all such externalities, even if they took place, were mere fact, and not truth. What I want is truth and self-development, and my spirit is just as lean as it was, after knowing any number of mere facts, however surprising or uncommon they may be. I am beyond the gaping stage, and when you tell me, the son of a married woman, that Christ was born of a virgin, thinking his a more miraculous birth than mine, I would laugh at your ignorance and stupidity if I did not know well how horn-hardening and stupefying to the mind it is to hear over and over for long years hearsay follies, how all-too natural it is also to repeat them. Marvels which are continually witnessed are seldom observed. There is nothing more wonderful in heaven or earth than the ordinary birth of a mouse; it is surely miraculous enough, and it is only stupidity that can keep anybody from seeing that. We read that Christ himself thought little of his own miracles in comparison with the miracles to be afterwards wrought by his followers through the spirit; and he was right: all his miracles in a bunch were nothing compared with that *one* miracle of the spirit in our own day, the abolition of the American slave-trade. "Greater things than these will ye do, because ye believe in me," said Christ; and but for these greater things, the Christian religion would have been but a poor affair. It is by abiding by externalities that so many Christians are so thin, so very-very thin-thin, like a leaf, a wafer, a coin from which both Caesar and his superscription have entirely vanished. They choose rather to live in a narrow, petty, deadening, formal round of so-called worship and ceremonies, in eager meager evangelicalisms, in Christolatry and Bibliolatry, ignorant that they are called up to take a share in working miracles of the spirit compared with which the miracles recorded of Christ are but mean.

92. The history of mankind is the history of the coming

of the spirit, and all men, and especially great men, are illustrations of that coming. There never was a time when the spirit had not come, but it is its nature to transcend itself, so that looking back it appears at any stage as if it had not yet come. It comes to men and nations. It comes in various ways, stays its own time; sometimes, insulted and grieved, it goes away from nations as from individual men. But to every man, and to every nation, it comes as a spirit of freedom. It came to the Greek chiefly as the spirit of art and philosophy; to the Roman chiefly as the spirit of public law and government; to the Jew chiefly as the spirit of righteousness. And the reception of the spirit of righteousness was so perfect in Christ, that he became conscious of union with God, and could announce to us how we also might rise to consciousness of that union. He did not die, as theological folly has asserted, to reconcile God to us; but "God was in him, reconciling the world to himself."

93. When the period of the world's history at which Christ appeared is considered, it might almost be said that spirit, put upon its mettle, produced him, just as nature, put upon her mettle, acquits herself in great style, when she fills up a fissure in a rock with crystals. Spirit is forever proceeding to ultimate itself. The extremity of realized ultimation is forever perishing, whilst the ideal center of spirit, forever forcing itself forward, forever lives. Everything in history, therefore, as in nature, is forever changing. No institution is absolutely the same for a single day, though often it may seem to be the same, and is, for all practical purposes, quite the same, for many years. But for all that, to the spirit it is actually not the same for an hour. To the vulgar eye, the institution is an isolated and steady thing; but to the scientific eye, it is a part of the everchanging whole. Vapor changes visibly, and the rock invisibly, but the one is not in the least degree more subject to the law of change than the other. So it is

with all institutions. Institutions depend on the minds of men, and though there is no visible alteration in the institution, any more than in the rock, for a long period, every minute brings on the time when the necessary though slow change in men's ways of thinking and feeling will bring along with it the visible alteration and the downfall, too, of that institution. At the advent of Christ the world's religions and institutions were all but out-worn, and where the spirit of righteousness and poetry had wrought with such vital power for so many ages in those burning prophets of the soul, its voice had already gone dumb for four hundred years, and it had been succeeded by a dry and withering spirit of theology and argument. The scribes and pharisees had studied the dead prophets so much and so mechanically that they could not recognize a living one when they saw him. A book can be read only by the same spirit that made it or by a higher, and want of spirit was their one great want. Their souls were attempting to live on paper and ink. Though they cherished one great hope, the hope of a deliverer, they did not know that the spirit never literally and narrowly fullfils its promises, but largely and spiritually. The national pride was humiliated; they longed for the successor of David who was to free them from the Roman yoke. But their genius was not for empire. In this forlorn state, there came a great last outburst of the national genius for righteousness—just when that genius seemed like a gibbering ghost among the ruins of the past, and when melodious living incarnations of it seemed gone forever. A deliverer appeared, indeed, but it was the Savior of the World. Then was witnessed the most awful illustration of a principle that lies in the very nature of spirit, a principle which is illustrated everywhere, at all times, and in regard to all things, but chiefly in regard to religion—the deadly opposition of the children of the letter to the children of the spirit. It is the children of the letter who in all ages have put the

prophets to death; and these very children in every country do put them to death still *as far as they can*. Now, however, they can only in general exercise spite in their hearts and with their tongue. And they do not know, any more than did their predecessors (who actually killed the prophets), that they are the killing letter of their father, whose works they verily do, and that the children of the spirit, whom they hate and withstand, are the brothers and succesors of those whose spirit embodied itself in that very letter, then living as the body of spirit, but now (as vipers kill though dead) both dead and killing. They fancy, indeed, that they are of God and of the spirit, they; they are very cautious and safe, they, and abide by the traditions of the elders, good men of old who bottled the truth for them and for all time in creeds and phrases: how do they know that what is new is true? Right: how should *they* know, who exclude God and spirit from themselves, choosing the mechanical and refusing the vital? They abide by the dead and deadly ultimation of what they call the past, ignorant that there is and can be no past for Spirit, but only an ever-living present, and that what they call the past may truly be called the lumberhole of the world into which spirit throws its worn-out garments. It was the children of the letter and the lumberhole who put Christ to death. It is worth while to examine the principle a little more closely.

94. In the progress of self-realization, spirit must annul by transcending its every stage of attainment, and this it can only do by giving opposition to itself, for it is only in a resisting medium that energy is possible. Now, the progress of spirit is not merely that of the individual, but of nations, and of the race also. But the development of spirit in nations is necessarily very unequal: some men in every nation are as gods compared with most other men. In this learned city of the south, there are thousands who are at least as far

north intellectually and morally as any of the inhabitants of any petty village in the Highlands; and all over the land, and in every country of Europe, there are hundreds of thousands who are living in the nineteenth century only in a formal relation to time, and not in a truly vital relation to the spirit of the time—almost beasts of burden, or worse, in the shape of men, who only know that they are men by the hearing of the ear.

> Ay, in the catalogue ye go for Men;
> As Hounds, and Greyhounds, Mongrels, Spaniels, Curs,
> Shoughs, Water-rugs, and Demi-wolves, are cleped
> All by the Name of Dogs.

But the effort of spirit is to lift all forward. The inspired prophet or poet is inspired just because he has a depth of sympathy and insight denied to other men. He accordingly is the great instrument of the spirit in its onward progress. He leads the van. The genius of the Hebrews was a genius for righteousness, and therefore a genius of the greatest earnestness. The intensity of its astringency and inwardness was terrible. The true God had chosen them and had revealed himself to them as to no other nation, and of this high distinction they were naturally proud. The inspired prophet or poet, with feelings peculiarly susceptible of everything great and noble, was still more proud of it than others; but proud in a higher sense, as seeing with an open eye into the inward splendor of the revelation itself. Between the inspired poet and the people stands the learned priest; and it is the duty of the priest to interpret the poet or prophet to the people. In the course of time, the priest's teaching, like everything else, becomes outworn; the spirit leaves it, preparing for a higher manifestation of itself; and what can the priest do then? He can teach nothing new, it is not in him; he is a mere priest, a mere clergyman, a mere

man of mechanical, spiritless learning. And so when the spirit in the new time, collecting itself for a new and higher embodiment, has withdrawn from the old forms and words, the priest continues to preach them as before, proud of the mere letter that once glowed and burned with spiritual heat and light, ignorant even, or seeing only by glimpses, that former priests, before the words had become outworn in relation to spirit, had preached otherwise. Not that the words have become empty and meaningless—far from it; they have meaning, but not spirit; they are still, when looked at from the right point of view, the divinest or among the divinest external things that the nation has. In this state of dead and deadening formality appears the new poet, the mouthpiece of the Living Spirit. He sees into the inner splendor of the revelation of his predecessor, which he reads with the same spirit, but a spirit enriched by that very revelation and by the experience of the developments of the national mind during the period when that revelation was vitally taught to the people. He beholds the ruinous effect of the dull prosaic priest's droning unspirituality, and he indignantly utters his divine protest and message, "Thus saith the Lord." It is now a serious question, between the prosaic multitudinous priest and the single inspired poet, which of them shall carry the people. There are always some in the vanguard of the age, soul-weary of the priest's soulless cant, ready to welcome the new poet, and there are many who are but a little behind; but it is far otherwise with the majority. The majority, even in intellectual and moral revolutions, can go over like one man, or rather like many sheep, in a body, when their priests go before, but they resist the new when their priests stay behind. The learned and formal priest acts according to his kind: the new poet or prophet is seriously interfering with his authority, since the best minds more or less openly side with him. And the priest, being as alive to his vested interests and his prestige

as he is dead to the perception of the new investment of divine truth, gets the prophet put to death according to the letter of divine law. But spirit was in that very majority even then, in the most formal time, to give the people at least a dim sense of want, if not a longing for the divine food which the priest should have given them instead of words, words, words. Indeed, the priest himself had not managed to stifle utterly in his own soul a certain such dim sense or dull longing, though he had perhaps scarcely any perception whatever of his position, so ridiculous if it were not ruinous, of a make-believe shepherd:

> Their lean and flashy Songs
> Grate on their scrannel Pipes of wretched straw.
> The hungry Sheep look up, and are not fed.

95. In killing the prophet, they did not kill his prophecy; there were some who knew how to value it, who treasured it, and loved it, and read it, and their number continued to increase, till it became, probably after the death of the leaders in the prophet's ruin, the conviction of the nation that the martyred prophet was indeed a messenger of the Most High. Then his sepulchre was built and garnished, with late repentant love and reverence. His words became sacred, as expressing men's feelings and thoughts with power and beauty: for the progress of spirit had now at last brought men in general near enough to the standpoint of the prophet to appreciate his utterances. And all this took place over and over again from age to age—the prophet's tragedy, as we may call it—the conflict between the children of the slavish ignoble letter and the martyrs of the noble free spirit. It is a *necessary* conflict, in one or another degree, in the progress of spirit in all times and places, and it is going on, as we find even at present when indifference, which is, for the most part, the soul of our toleration, so greatly pre-

dominates. The children of the letter put Jesus to death in the name of Moses, and they are still at their work in the name of Jesus.

96. At this moment, there is a very great battle going on all round you, in religion as well as in politics, between the children of the letter and the children of the spirit. The battle will be hotter yet before the century, ay, and before this present decade is out. You have taken, or will take, the one side or the other, according to your kind. But if you are a poor half-man, neither a son of the letter nor a son of the spirit, you may be ready to stifle enquiry and persecute a child of the spirit, or you may be ready to support him and encourage enquiry, depending on whether you expect that there will or will not be a sufficient number in the general assembly to back you. While thus acting with adroitness and sly Ulyssean cunning, you may have the conscience to preach a funeral sermon praising the dead for having possessed the simplicity that is in Christ. Or again, if you are a poor half-man, having subscribed the *Confession of Faith,* you may, both by your preaching and by your Browning-Tennysonian-echo so-called poems, fully belie up to the safe line and quite ignore—which it is always safe to do in an *aut vitam aut culpam* situation—the doctrine you were engaged to teach. Thus you pocket the money of the church and, at the same time, the praise of its enemies—very adroit conduct too. Balaam could not curse Jacob and defy Israel, and yet he liked the king's countenance and coin. But poor Balaam had something true in him: he *could* speak and write without affectation; and there is the right poetic ring in the one piece of verse which he has left. And, in a question of comparison, let us remember this, too, in Balaam's favor—that he never undertook to preach that God from all eternity had—out of the mere good pleasure of his will and without foresight of any evil to be committed by them—foreordained

multitudes of human creatures to be burned in everlasting fire for nothing else but for having been present by his decree in the loins of Adam. Balaam did not preach that multitudes would be burned for being where they could not help but be when Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, thousands of years before they knew anything of the fact, a fact they learned only when they were taught the gospel of the grace of God, some years after they were born. Balaam did not preach that they were born to be whipped, too—some of them—for not answering correctly, when they were merry little boys going through school on their way to hell, the question, "What are the decrees of God?" No, Balaam the First, when he was a flashily-eloquent young man, fresh from college, and exceedingly desirous of a good manse, would have disdained to promise to preach *that*. So, too, would his ass.

97. The child of the spirit will not acquit himself well in the war of liberation, and he will not help us on to victory as he might do, unless he fully knows the philosophy of all revelation—how it is that nothing can be revealed to him except himself, and that all else, however apparently well supported by forensic logic, is only hearsay, at best probability. All revelation is self-realization. The whole world of nature without I can perceive only by and in my senses, and reduce (or, say, raise) to contents of spirit by means of category. All history too, the history of today, of events of which I am witness, as the history of the past millenniums, all the actions of my fellow-creatures as well as my fellow-creatures themselves, I can only know within me. Were there a God altogether distinct from myself, I could only know him within. Everything, as it is possible for me to know it, is *within*. But like can only be known to like. Were nature not at bottom spirit, spirit could not realize itself by means of nature. And we can know God only in so far as we

realize him in ourselves and therefore are Him. There can be nothing for us external to ourselves.

98. The one rule for you, then, is this: Be, aim at being, in your spirit what you ought to be, and you will cease to care for hearsay—for what must be hearsay, and worthless to spirit as spirit, even if it were true. See that you are really risen with Christ in the spirit, which is the true birth of spirit, and you will care not, as regards religion, whether Christ was born of a virgin or raised from the dead, or no. It is of no consequence to spirit where Christ came from or where he went to; but it is of the utmost consequence to spirit that spirit should have realized itself to the point where that problem, and all other externalities, are of no consequence to it. Christ's birth and resurrection are simply questions for science; and religion should frankly give them over to science. If science should, perhaps not improbably, make short work with them, it would not be for the first time that religion has been well and faithfully served by her handmaid.

99. Since my Bible, and all Bibles, are only paper and ink and pasteboard and paste and thread, etc., it can be of no consequence to spirit to know, for instance, who wrote John's Gospel. The only question for spirit is what categories it has mastered in order to enable it to realize in itself the ideal substance of John's Gospel, as already explained, not by *getting* anything passively, but by *giving*. Spirit can only get by what itself gives: none, not even God, can make a present to spirit. Such is the greatness and dignity of man. He can only get by giving, he can only live by dying. As it has been written by a master, *Stirb und werde:* die that you may be.

100. Our matter might easily have been spread out thin

to a long treatise, but we would not grind our seed-corn. Many clever and seemingly honest minds, but minds surely essentially weak and foolish, are now walking in the thick darkness of brutal atheism; and to the question, *Canst thou by searching find out God?* we have here given, both in the intellectual and moral sense, together with the proof, the answer, *If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee.* We have also conclusively showed that that answer and proof, in the moral sense, involves the truth of Christianity, the highest possible religion, and that, as spirits, we are living, even now, in the Eternal Kingdom of That Which Could Not But Be. The question of personal immortality did not fall to be separately considered; but it may just be stated that the more highly we are able to think of the dignity and greatness of human nature, the more hope there evidently is for personal immortality.

101. But we shall now conclude, having thrust our left arm into the sleeve of our singing robes. I consider the faces of men, and how the covering clouds form deep and cling, or lightly again disperse, spun off by the mystic influence of secret thoughts of hope and courage, or roll heavily away at the advent of fairer fortune, or, gradually absorbed by the strong long-sustaining spirit, vanish, or, charged with grief too burdensome to bear, dissolve in tears, where the radiant smile lately lighted up, like a serene sky, the heavenly countenance. I consider the eyes of men beaming with God-like intelligence and love, and how men can make air the medium for pouring as it were the contents of their divine souls into each other's ears as into cups, and how they are reared in families round the parental hearth, and have holy sweet affection for reverend father and tender mother and brother and sister, an imperfect image of the deep love for the child, comparable to a wellspring of eternity bursting up into time, and how they learn the elements of redeeming

lore from lips and from eyes of faces over whose ancient sorrow there is plainly written *VICTORY,* lips and eyes ready with glad and gladdening smile of approbation, and ready, too, with stern glance and firm word of needful check, or high correcting rebuke. I consider how men bear through life the sacred memories of the heart's first bloom, and how, disdaining limits, they embrace their city and its neighborhood, their native land and the world, and (a thing worthy to make God himself glory in the deepest deep of his being, as proof consummate of his consummate success, and but for which his failure and defeat would have been as consummate) how, with love rising to the highest height of self-sacrificial energy and showing its unbounded force of innate character, they, identifying themselves to absolute self-forgetfulness with a righteous cause, would suffer themselves to be crushed to annihilation and would endure even everlasting curse for its sake. When I consider these things, I exclaim, What is the starry firmament? What are its innumerable islets, eyelike, sparkling and glistering as with the intensest soul itself of Uncreated Light and filling the boundless abyss of ether Blue? What is the moon, at the fullest, gazing leisurely abroad about her, bright and clear, in her long, calm, solitary, slow procession of midnight glory? What is the sun when, returning from the South, he brings back the mild year, when wild-howling winter flies from his face, when nature again puts on her flower-spotted green garment, and, for joy of his coming, the birds, the merry-hearted little feathered fellows of the wood and field, break out into singing? Filled with courage by the sun's kindly heat, the birds mate and build their hopeful nests among the green leafy branches, and the thick green growing grass, and, chief of song, the lark, springing from the furrow, mounts up, ever singing, though often half-inclined to pause and to poise as on slow meditative pinion, high into Heaven, till he is wholly hid in the far liquid blue,

or is but barely seen, a dim speck, on the vapory fringe of some white cloud, pouring out his full melodious heart, which, inexhaustible, seems to fill again faster than he can pour it forth, *tirra, lirra, lirra, trill, trill, trill, trill,* and the cuckoo comes, and the swallow, and the year grows rank and lush, and brightens with blossoming roses, beneath the fostering eye, and even the desert is glad, and the heath clothes itself in purple, and the year ripens apace and waves far and wide with yellow harvests and hangs in rich adornment of red apple and purple grape, heedless yet of the coming surly rebuke again preparing in the far cold North. What is the sun when, lately risen—night in her dark robe having already long fled with hurrying step over the western hills in terror of his approaching presence, who forever chases her (as truth error) with unrelenting persistence round the world—he, with morning freshness, scales the steep eternal heights, in unwearied vigor of imperishable prime, and the ocean burns broad beneath his beamy path like one mighty multitudinous moving mass of molten gold, never to be coined for covetousness, and leafy wood and grassy meadow glitter gloriously with dewdrops of heavenly hue hanging on blade and leaf, and, in their various resplendent, though transitory, luster, the emeralds, the amethysts, the topazes, the opals, the rubies, the sapphires, the diamonds of an hour, as they gleam and glow and burn, outvie the brightest gems adorning the queens of the earth? What is the sun when, brilliant beyond beholding, he dazzles the daring eye, riding on in ineffable might and majesty of noontide triumph, as if repressing an exulting shout, so joyful in the consciousness of his irresistibly-penetrating power, a power that hid the fire in the flint and filled the Jewel with Light and with far-reaching invisible influence finds the roots of the pale and sapless vegetation of the deep, and, in its blind creeping creatures, calls forth, as if for once in futile compassion, vague hints of unnecessary eyes, and that, with high

summons to ocean and sea and lake and mighty river, with strict intimation, too, sent to every stream and brook and rill and pool and marsh not to fail of their respective contingents at his great bidding, raises from vapor and marshals in the vast space of his circuit, as they tread upon nothing, in long-drawn ranks of war, the files of threatening cloud, charged with insupportable sulphurous fury, ready to burst in far-seen angry flash and deafening roar of far-heard artillery? What is the sun when, with secret mysterious hand, he builds in a moment on the dark dissolving bosom of the rainy cloud, like a colored scarf cast upon it, the wondrous arch, fit ornament for surrounding the Throne of God, or when, setting, he lights up a turbulent sea of tossing cloud with far-shining splendor of fiery glow? What, I ask, are the starry firmament and the moon and the sun together apart from *Man,* with his inward splendors of the spirit—*Man,* but for whom they, and myriads of myriads such as they, are of no value—*Man,* but for whom they are as good as are not—*Man,* for whose potentially infinite spirit the actually infinite universe is but a body, and whose unrealizable, because infinite, internality of spirit is a mate and match for the infinite externality of nature—*Man,* capable of realizing perfect union with God by the uncreated cross of Christ, in the one threefold glory of which only are made fully known eternal power and wisdom and love, and by which only are to be experienced, in the secretest power of bliss, the unutterable laughters of the soul? What are they but for him, *Man,* with the Temple of the Highest in his heart (if there too the strange place of Graves), *Man,* who, on issuing sooner or later from the natural sphere into which he is born and living—as, in his essential spiritual nature, he lives now and only and forever—in the Eternal Kingdom of That Which Could Not But Be, projects by necessity, as the reflection of his responsibility, a Hell as deep as his Heaven is high—*Man,* capable of taking

an earnest look, as it were over the brink, into the fearful depths and chasms far-descending, capable of taking a survey of the sacred sublime heights of his own divine nature, and capable of making with all resolution and speed for the heights, of reaching the heights, and of living forever with God on the heights? What are they, the starry firmament, and the moon, and the sun, apart from *Him,* this grand and glorious child and friend and fellow of the Eternal Spirit? The moon and the stars are but higher than the mud, and the Sun has been crowned but with glory and honor above the clay.

On reading over what I have written, I am far from feeling satisfied that I have sufficiently well expressed my doctrine on the philosophy of all possible revelation. Yet it is fully and finally established. I shall, however, here make some additional remarks that may be of some use to certain minds earnestly seeking the truth.

The problem of philosophy is either *What is the universe?* or *How must we think the universe?* If the former, it presupposes, in looking for an answer, that we are capable of perfect knowledge, though that perfect knowledge may not yet be ours and is yet only an object of search. But if in regard to any one single question, we have arrived at perfect knowledge, the hope cannot be foolish that, in regard to any other whatsoever, we may one day, soon or late, arrive at perfect knowledge. They surely deserve well of mankind who have given their lives to the hitherto baffled pursuit of perfect knowledge—objects they are of reverence and regard, like soldiers lying dead on the battlefield, who do not march victorious with their comrades into the capital of the conquered enemy—for finders of truth partly owe *their* success to the baffled seekers. But we *are capable* of knowing perfectly. We have, for instance, an absolutely perfect or infinite knowledge that two and two make and must make four, that, where two things are parallel to a third, they are and must be parallel to each other, that the sum of the angles of a triangle are and must be equal to two right angles, and that throughout the boundless universe these truths hold and rule. We have an absolutely perfect and infinite knowledge that these and other such truths are not

true by the command or will of any God whatsoever, and that for any God whatsoever to command two and two to be five would be, only because frightful, not a ridiculous instance of divine lunacy. The God might command such; were it possible, he might stamp with rage and hurl his thunderbolts—but impotently; for every two thunderbolts added to two would, in spite of the noise, quietly continue to make *four* thunderbolts, and every two and two stamps would steadily remain *four* stamps. We are, then, capable of perfect or infinite knowledge, so that no God whatsoever could possibly know better than we. And since what, and only what, we know perfectly or infinitely *must* be known by us, if at all, *infinitely* or *perfectly,* it follows that our second form of the problem of philosophy—*How* must *we think the universe?*—is virtually the same as our first, *What* is *the universe?* For we cannot know what the universe *is,* except by knowing perfectly that what we think of it is what we *must* think of it, and that necessary thought is perfect and infinite in its nature.

We see with perfect clearness that the universe possesses a twofold nature: it has being and existence. The pen with which I write has existence, and it has force to *exist* among other existing things, but it has no power of *being* whatsoever, for, before I can glance twice at it, it has passed away in a degree that is, in thought, *infinitely* divisible. It has its existence entirely in and by what is not itself. When, therefore, we say What *is,* we refer to that in which all pens, and all things in all worlds, have their changing existence. All that has existence came into existence and passes out of it. But pure unimaginative thought possesses changeless *being.* The thought that two and two make four, for instance, is, in itself, perfect and infinite; it is, by its nature, insusceptible of degree, and it is unchangeable, and, in every child equally as in any possible angel or any God, it intellectually rules, with perfect and infinite power, all things changeable

throughout the boundless external universe, and all things unchangeable in the spaceless realms within.

Let us pause here for a moment, reader, if you please. It may, perhaps, be profitable for you and for me to pause and consider a little, especially if what I have heard or read somewhere is true, as I believe it is—that *the soul-touched man is the true philosopher.* Consider the infinite and unspeakable dignity of every child. I have just been trying to recollect how frequently I have read or heard what seemed to me to approach or reach adequacy regarding that unutterable dignity. I remember but the sayings of three men—and the saying of a Fourth. Lord Moncreiff, I think it was who once, in a public speech, claimed for manhood respect, and for womanhood reverence, but claimed for childhood, as for the most honorable old age, *veneration.* Dr. Stirling, in one of those skeleton-poems so frequently to be found in his prose works, has pictured the awe-struck congregation standing and gazing at the baby at the baptismal font; it is a picture well worthy of a poet and philosopher's eye. Nor can another truly *see* it before the philosopher and poet has pointed it out. Wordsworth has said, *Heaven lies about us in our infancy.* But there is the saying of a Fourth, of Him who spake as never another man spake, who remains yet alone in a category by Himself, high over the heads and still more truly in a deeper deep than the hearts of other men, the Savior of the World: *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.* Let us now return, refreshed, to our work.

We have so far explained the nature and relation of existence and being. We have shown, by our examples, that pure unimaginative thought *is,* and not, like a thing of time, *ex-is.* It is infinite and eternal in its nature, insusceptible of increase or diminution, possessed of infinite and eternal power, being, though itself destitute of extent, and belong-

ing neither to space nor time, able, even in a little child, equally as in any angel or possible God, to rule perfectly all that extends and changes, as well as all that is unchangeable and without extent. What is of pure being, then, is neither young nor old, was not yesterday and will not be tomorrow, is neither of earth nor of sky; it infinitely and eternally *is,* and, therefore, by its nature, it could not but be.

But it may be asked how the knowledge that two and two make four, if it belongs to pure being, and not to space and time, came to be in a child who did not know it yesterday. I reply, *first,* that we do not really at bottom know the *how* of any one thing whatsoever, and it is only vague and slovenly thinking that makes people imagine they do; and, *second,* that the questioner errs in his whole mental position and effort. He should try to develop time from eternity and not eternity from time. Whatever evolutions there may have been (and I believe, that there never has been anything from unbeginning—and that there never will be anything to unending—time, in the time-world or boundless external universe, but evolution, which I take to be the *role* of existence in the everlasting divine drama), it is as perfectly clear, it is as infinitely certain as that two and two are four that all such things as that two and two are four are *eternally incapable of evolution.* When we are conscious of the knowledge that two and two are four, *it is already perfect and infinite;* it did not at all *come to be.* What comes changes and passes; what cannot change and pass cannot come. Of things that come no two are perfectly like (since the causes of each individual thing are necessarily infinite in number and different); of things that cannot change and pass (things purely intellectual) all are absolutely the same in all minds. Things that cannot change and pass are illustrated by things that change and pass—illustrated to spirits, finite spirits—actually finite, but potentially infinite—from eternity to eternity, by God himself—imagination mediating

between the world of pure thought and the world of the senses. God, not in time, but in the order of thinking, divides Himself, in order that He may act; He eternally gives opposition to Himself and overcomes Himself. Through this action, spirit is conscious and personal; and every spirit is a form of God, the absolutely unnameable and infinitely infinite Eternal Spirit—neither masculine, nor feminine, nor neuter, nor thought, nor thing—the unnameable first and last intellectual and moral energy working from unbegun to endless time through boundless space in spirit and matter, and in matter *for* spirit, since matter is merely means and commodity, as ground and support for the body and sign for the soul. The reader who would properly understand must consider the nature of language and the necessarily inadequate struggle of pure thought to utter itself in words that never can be perfectly purified from their figurative origin. Everything, then, in the time-world comes to exist and passes away; everything in the world of being eternally is. The time-child, then, who knows today and did not know yesterday, has, so to speak, in realizing personality, *come to eternity,* and can now advance more and more into eternity. I have much to say here; but what I have already said is enough for my purpose, since I have shown with infinite clearness, with absolute certainty, that the worlds of pure being and of existence are *one* in man, that what is infinite and eternal by nature and what is changing and infinite in extent meet in and constitute him, that man is both mind and manifestation.

And as with his mental, so with his moral, being. For will, pure will, likewise, is infinite and eternal in its nature, and is not in space and time, being inextended.

Man, then, is not a creature to whom God *deigns* to do this and *deigns* to do that; one might as well speak of God deigning to be. God is not ratiocinative: a ratiocinative God would, for one thing, be a perfect puzzle to himself.

The inevitable outgoings of the divine energy in thought and love (one in self-consciousness, as light and heat are one in the principle of fire) form man, an incarnation of God, to stand up, and, by means of senses and of fantasy, see, as it were, an image of eternity in space and time, and so to realize in himself the true eternity. To such a being God alone is his own revelation; and how this revelation is made I have clearly (and, so far as I know, *first*) explained.

And the explanation is a matter of immense importance to every soul of man and to the world. To show this fully would lead me too far at present; but as the reader should now perfectly know how it is that "the kingdom of heaven is within," and within only, he should know what ought utterly to destroy in him forever the shallow and vain direction of his imagination to an external paradise, and even *that* is of immense importance. Not that another state of being is hopeless; it is nearer certainty than ever. But what we have to do here is only to realize the kingdom of heaven within. Those who have an insufficient sense of this are often led into cant and hypocrisy, and they are not ashamed to lift up their voices to God (who is truth itself) and sing—

> What faith rejoices to believe,
> We long and pant to see;
> We would be absent from the flesh,
> And present, Lord, with thee. . . .

when they certainly would sing, if they sang the real keenly-felt fact, without lying and hypocrisy—

> What faith rejoices to believe,
> *We do not want to see;*
> *We would be present with the flesh,*
> *And absent, Lord, from thee.*

How pleasing to God, the honest God of truth, would this true and honest version be in comparison with the other! Verily, verily, I say unto you, that the singer of the other version *has* his reward.

The unspeakable greatness of man must surely now be perfectly apparent to the most thoughtless reader, and, perhaps, he may now be able to regard a child's baptism with other eyes, and with the awe of which the poet-philosopher spoke. The congregation stand up to pray; and the minister of God, pausing in the midst of his earnest prayer for the baby, baptizes, and resumes his earnest prayer for him, having, in that pause of imploring adoration, solemnly received into the bosom of the Christian church, if he will but have the wisdom to claim his birthright, an heir of Heaven. *If!* Ah, in that solemn parenthetic pause of imploring adoration, what thoughts of hope and fear flash through the minds of men! What thoughts of this time-world and its deceits! What thoughts of children that once lay innocent like that baby in their mother's arms at the baptismal font! But, except for the *fear,* what romance could there be in the *hope?* Lying, then, there in his mother's arms, in his white baptismal robe, wrapped, too, in another, a fear-fringed robe of awful hope, him, an incarnation of true eternity, and dividing and uniting in himself the two sense-and-fantasy eternities of flowing time, the father takes and raises to receive the symbol of purifying grace: surely an object, this wonder of wonders, of veneration for the feeling mind, which truly divines the meaning, which easily understands the dialect, to others difficult, of Jesus, when, thinking doubtless of the ideal heights of divine humanity, he said, *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*

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